UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ELDER-COUNSELLORS' GUIDANCE FOR WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS CLIENTS

By

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education

in

Counselling Psychology
Department of Educational Psychology

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall, 2004

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Your file   Votre référence
ISBN: 0-612-95681-4
Our file   Notre référence
ISBN: 0-612-95681-4

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Canada

DEDICATION

For

my children
JASON, NAOMI AND PETER

Without whom I would not have come to know what it really means to love

And

my husband
DAVID

For continuing to love me and encourage my growth

Without all of you I would not have had the resolve to embark on this path

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank, first and foremost, Spirit Eagle, Bessie, White Thunderbird Woman, Sandra and Peggy. Without each of you having the willingness and patience to be open with me and help me understand, this thesis could not have been completed. I hope my words honour you, and that the respect I have for you shows through in every sentence.

I also want to thank my supervisor, Dr. Farah Merali, for the time you invested in the process and for your encouragement and attention to detail. Now that it's finished, I can honestly say I appreciate your determination to make me excel. Thank you Dr. Robin Everall for your excellent and specific advice in the last stages of the work. And to Dr. Cora Weber-Pillwax, I want to say that I was honoured that you were willing to sit on my defense committee and share your perspective and wisdom with me. Without your input I would always have wondered if I had taken a wrong turn somewhere.

I pay tribute to my family, past and present, especially my mother and father, for instilling in me a desire to learn and to keep going against all odds. I also specifically want to recognize my sister and her husband. Thanks for supporting my idea and for giving me the courage to take that first step.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the understanding, wisdom, and encouragement I received from friends Jessica, Christine, and Barbara. Thanks to all of you for seeing me through the days when I wanted to give up. Each one of you is an inspiration and a blessing and I am fortunate to have you in my life.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Over the years, a number of counselling approaches have been developed based on various theories about how people change and what techniques are the most effective in bringing about this change. Recent estimates suggest that there are now over 400 systems of therapy, each of which professes to be effective in helping clients change (Prochaska & Norcross, 1999). Some of these methods of counselling deal specifically with counselling across cultures (Atkinson, Morton & Sue, 1993; Axelson, 1999; Paniagua, 1998; Pedersen, 1999, 2000; Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner, & Trimble, 2002; Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 1995, 2001; Sue & Sue, 1999, 2003). As there are many cultural groups in North America, and many subgroupings among cultural groups, counselling effectively with members of any one culture requires a conscious effort to develop an understanding of the group's cultural norms, beliefs, values, history, and presenting problems, as well as their preferred helping approaches (Sue & Sue, 2003).

This thesis, which focuses on assisting European-Canadian counsellors to become more competent and helpful when working with Indigenous clients, builds on the suggestions of Indigenous Elder-Counsellors who understand and value Indigenous culture and who are trained in Western counselling practices. The background chapter will present some demographic and historical information about Canada's Indigenous peoples, as well as the unique beliefs, values, and healing traditions that may shape their expectations about the counselling process. Evidence of the ineffectiveness of Western models of counselling with Indigenous peoples will also be discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the researcher's background and personal interest in culturally sensitive counselling with Indigenous peoples.

Canada's Indigenous Peoples

At present, approximately 1.3 million (or 4.4 percent) of Canada's inhabitants identify themselves as Indigenous or Aboriginal (Statistics Canada, 2004). This includes those who call themselves North American Indians, Métis, or Inuit, and incorporates Treaty or Registered Indians, non-status Indians, and/or First Nations or Band members (Statistics Canada). Since many individuals do not identify themselves as Indigenous or did not participate in the 2001 census, it is believed that this is an underestimate of the current population (Statistics Canada). In addition, the current birth rate of Indigenous peoples is approximately 1.5 times that of the overall population (Statistics Canada).

The Indigenous population is not spread evenly across Canada and in some areas makes up the majority of the populace. This is particularly true of northern Canada. For example, 85 % of the residents of Nunavut are Indigenous, 51 % of those from the Northwest Territories are Indigenous and 23 % of the population of the Yukon Territory identify themselves as Indigenous (Statistics Canada). The Indigenous population of Saskatchewan and Manitoba comprises 14 % of the total population while Alberta's Indigenous residents make up 5 % of the total (Statistics Canada). Of the overall Indigenous population, almost 50 % live in urban areas, 31% live on reserves or in settlements, and 19.5% live in rural non-reserve areas (Statistics Canada).

Historical Context

Peat (2002) states that Western researchers have speculated that North America's original inhabitants arrived from somewhere else but this has recently come into dispute. What is not in dispute is that Indigenous Peoples have lived in various locations across the continent for many thousands of years. The vastly different environmental conditions that existed resulted in the development of distinct languages, lifestyles and cultural forms, each one uniquely suited to the particular environment (Waldram, 1997a). An examination of findings regarding the health of Indigenous Peoples before the colonial period suggests that, prior to contact with Europeans, the population was relatively healthy and free of disease (Peat, 2002; Waldram, Herring & Young, 1995).

Shortly after the time of contact with Europeans, infectious diseases started to decimate the population, sometimes resulting in whole communities being wiped out or leaving some groups without leadership or without women capable of child-bearing (Cook, 1981; Waldram, Herring & Young, 1995). Then, to add further injury to these regrettable circumstances, colonial and imperialist thinking resulted in the formulation of policies intended to either exterminate or assimilate Indigenous populations (Long & Dickason, 1998; Tobias, 1983, Waldram, 1997a). For decades, First Nations and Inuit peoples were forced onto reserves and/or into settlements where they were given inadequate food and were deprived of proper medical care. Children were forcibly taken from their families and placed in residential schools where they were punished for practicing their culture, religion and for speaking their own language (Akiwenzie-Damm & Sutherland, 1998; Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Long & Dickason, 1998; Ross, 1992; Waldram, Herring & Young, 1995; Waldram, 1997a, 1997b). This forced separation from family and community, sometimes for years on end, had a profound effect on generations of Indigenous peoples. Not only were they harshly punished at these schools, many were also sexually abused. Many residential school survivors developed self-esteem and identity problems. They could no longer identify with their parents and Elders, which resulted in a loss of cultural understanding and parenting skills and often led to drug and alcohol abuse, violence and the sexual abuse of others (Akiwenzie-Damm & Sutherland, 1998; Assembly of First Nations. 1994, 1997; Waldram, 1997b). Furthermore, the attempt to divorce Indigenous peoples from their cultural practices and family supports prevented them from accessing the coping and healing resources within their own communities to deal with these problems. Today, Canada's Indigenous peoples are considered the country's most disadvantaged group and experience all the health problems associated with poverty and social, political, and cultural inequity (Kirmayer, Boothroyd, Tanner, Adelson, & Robinson, 2000; Waldram, 1997b; Waldram, Herring & Young, 1995).

The marginalization of Indigenous peoples continues with the effects of racism, poverty, and social and health problems still plaguing large numbers of people. A study of 32 Aboriginal communities in Canada found that mortality rates among Indigenous peoples differ from the general population in that 32 % are caused by accidents, such as vehicle collisions or fires, compared to 8.6% in the population as a whole. Suicide rates are also as high (Jarvis and Boldt,1982, cited in Waldram, 1997b). A Saskatchewan study of mortality among Status Indians found that alcohol use was indicated in 92% of vehicle accidents and in 80% of deaths due to exposure (Szabo, 1990, cited in Waldram). Waldram cautions that: "Despite this fact, and the obvious role that alcohol plays in the high rates of sudden traumatic death, it is not always recognized that it is a *minority* of Aboriginal peoples overall who experience difficulties in their use of alcohol" (p. 174). Depression, leading to suicide, is another concern in many Indigenous communities. Elders in an Ontario Ojibwa community suggested that suicide is related to "loss of spirituality (i.e. traditional religious beliefs and practices) with less sharing and a greater emphasis on materialism" (p. 179). Waldram argues that poverty and deprivation, together with loss of culture, family ties, racism and discrimination are important factors in the high rates of suicide among Indigenous peoples. He pointed out that those Indigenous individuals and communities that report having stronger cultural identities and more control over community resources tend to exhibit fewer mental health problems.

Indigenous Peoples and Counselling

In spite of the potential need of some Indigenous individuals for counselling to help deal with the aftermath of colonialism, abuse, and intergenerational trauma, many do not access services available to them or terminate counselling early (French, 1989; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Peavy, 1993; Sue, 1981). Garrett and Herring (2001) suggest that "such reluctance to use professional counselling may also be attributable to their memory of the frequent, tragic interactions that they have had with non-Native people" (p. 149).

View of Western Psychology

LaFromboise (1988) states that Indigenous clients have expressed concerns about the biases of Western psychology and how counsellors try to mold behaviors that fit a Western worldview, which conflict with Indigenous worldview and lifestyles. Sue & Sue (2003) remind us that the profession of counselling reflects the values and beliefs of the dominant society. Since most counsellors come from the European-North American tradition, they may not be aware of how cultural and historical factors may impact the counselling process when working with a marginalized population (Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993; Ridley, 1995, Sue, 2001; Sue & Sue, 1999).

Training issues

Sue, Akutsu & Higashi (1985) propose that the major reason for cross-cultural ineffectiveness in counselling stems from how health professionals are trained. Recent research on the multicultural competence of Canadian counsellors suggests that, among counsellors in practice for ten or more years, only one-third have taken at least one course in multicultural counselling (Arthur & Januszkowski, 2001). Once they finished their schooling, 64% did attend workshops dealing with multicultural counselling issues. However, 68% did not have supervision to help them deal with culturally diverse clients and 73% were not involved in any methods of case consultation. Given that this research involved a self-report questionnaire with a return rate of only 38%, it is possible that many other counsellors who have been in the profession for some time have minimal multicultural training. Das (1995) states that by 1995, 90% of counsellor education programs had at least one course in multicultural counselling, but that this is not enough to meet the needs of an ever expanding culturally diverse population. He suggests that counsellor education programs incorporate the social and cultural foundations of counselling and its impact in cross-cultural counselling into pre-existing courses. He based this suggestion on the premise that: "counselling is a culture-specific human invention. Each form of counselling is a reflection of the culture that produces it" (p. 51).

Counselling Congruent with the Indigenous Perspective

Multicultural counselling research reveals that many minority clients prefer counsellors of their own cultural group (Atkinson & Lowe, 1995). However, there are not enough Indigenous counsellors to meet the needs of every Indigenous person seeking help (Thomason, 1999). Therefore, a number of Indigenous individuals may find themselves sitting across from a European-Canadian counsellor. It would be extremely valuable for European-Canadian counsellors to come to a deeper understanding of what the counselling process may involve from an Indigenous perspective and then use intervention strategies that are congruent with the worldview and healing philosophy of Indigenous culture (Arredondo, 1998; Fischer, Jome & Atkinson, 1998; Ibrahim, 1991; Sue & Arredondo, 1992).

The importance of worldview. It has been explained that in the Indigenous worldview, values and beliefs may differ from those of middle-class individuals of European ancestry (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Herring, 1996; Ross, 1992). Relationships are considered more collateral than hierarchical, there may be a present rather than future focus, reflecting a more flexible approach to time, individuals may be more oriented towards being rather than doing, and the harmonious connection between people and nature is emphasized (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Garrett & Herring, 2001). These potential differences may affect expectations regarding the nature of the counselling relationship, where counselling takes place, the time frames and goals of counselling sessions, and appropriate intervention strategies (Herring, 1996; Ho, 1987; Sue & Sue, 2003).

For many years, the multicultural counselling literature has been emphasizing that understanding the worldview and specific culture of the client is an essential component of counsellor cultural competence (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Paniagua, 1998; Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992). Sue et al. (1992) defined a culturally competent counsellor as one who: a) is in the process of becoming more aware of his or her assumptions about appropriate/healthy behavior, values, and beliefs; b) is actively trying to understand the worldview of his or her client without making negative judgements; and c) is skilled in using culturally appropriate intervention strategies. Indigenous healers, especially those who have an understanding of the assumptions of Western counselling, could provide Euro-Canadian counsellors with vital information about culturally appropriate approaches that may prove beneficial when working with Indigenous clients.

Indigenous Healing Traditions

Indigenous cultures have their own healing traditions, which have persisted over time and across generations, in spite of going through a period of being banned and forbidden (Thomason, 2000; Waldram, 1997a, 1997b; Waldram, Herring & Young, 1995). Early accounts of these healing traditions were based on the written descriptions of European traders and missionaries, who looked at Indigenous healing practices through ethnocentric eyes. Waldram, Herring & Young (1995) explain that:

> Aboriginal healing traditions were often seen as primitive, fraudulent, and even harmful; the healers as charlatans; and the patients as superstitious and ignorant…Yet, close examination of these texts often also reveals a grudging acknowledgement that many elements of Aboriginal healing, did, indeed, work. (p. 98)

Fortunately, Indigenous oral records, as well as the healing practices themselves, have been passed from generation to generation and provide us with an understanding of the reasons individuals sought help and the kinds of practices they sought. Waldram, Herring & Young (1995) point out that mental or physical disease among Indigenous peoples was thought to come about either through natural occurrences or through supernatural forces: "the world is seen as a place in which harmony and balance exist between and among human beings and spiritual or 'other-than-human' entities, and serious illness is indicative of a disruption in this balance" (p. 101).

The healing traditions and practices that address these imbalances include herbal remedies, rituals and ceremonies. These are administered or conducted by various kinds of healers and helpers such as herbalists, medicine men or shaman (Waldram, Herring & Young, 1995). Due to their worldly and spiritual experiences and their understanding of the cultural, historical, and societal context of those who come to them for assistance, these helpers are perceived as a source of guidance and wisdom in the Indigenous community. Today, these helpers are most often referred to as Elders and are called upon to help community members deal with their psychological distress (Waldram, 1997a).

Waldram explains that "the healer is central to the process of symbolic healing, and in this sense Aboriginal Elders are central to Aboriginal spirituality" (p. 109).

It is the intent of this qualitative study to draw on the wisdom of Indigenous Elder-Counsellors, who also have training in Western counselling approaches, to provide information on how the counselling environment, relationship, process and interventions could be adapted to ensure cultural sensitivity when Euro-Canadian counsellors are working with Indigenous clients.

Background to this Study: The Researcher's Story

My interest in the topic of cross-cultural counselling, particularly in situations where counsellors are from the dominant culture and are working with Indigenous clients, stems from my own personal and family experiences. It is important to share some of this history so that readers can understand how I came to develop an interest in the experiences of Indigenous peoples in their homeland.

I came to Canada with my parents when I was three years old. I had a strange name, ate strange food, didn't speak English until I started school in grade one, and was rejected by some children who thought that because I was German, I was also a Nazi. During the '50s and '60s, Germans were often considered the scourge of the earth and were regarded as evil-minded murderers. It is understandable that I couldn't wait to grow up and get married so I could change my family name to something more Canadian. The experience of being an outsider shaped my life in many, many ways, some of which I have only recently began to comprehend and appreciate. One way it influenced me was that even as a child I became intensely interested in other cultures, other ways of life, and other worldviews.

At 19, I married a First Nations man and spent more than 12 years living in the bush, 50 kilometres away from a community in Canada's north. I had often danced to the beat of a different drum so moving from a city life to a country life and learning to live more in rhythm with nature felt very right. We had three children and took in many more foster children over the years. Many of them were Indigenous, as were many of our friends. I learned about hunting, fishing, farming, snaring rabbits, eating gophers, outhouses, and cutting winter wood. I also learned about racism, prejudice, insensitivity and how many people from the dominant culture were downright uncharitable to Indigenous people, mostly because they didn't have the patience or willingness to learn and understand. I found my Indigenous friends to be very accepting of me and I discovered this was not as often true of many White people in regards to their Indigenous neighbours.

When I moved back south to a large city, I found it more difficult to fit in as did my children, a process often referred to as *culture shock*. It did seem very cold in the city—difficult to meet people and difficult to find time to just be. Everyone was always going somewhere in a hurry. Eventually, I acclimatized back to the city way of life but have never again felt totally comfortable with it.

Many years later, when I went back to university to become a counsellor, the lack of consideration of others' cultures in what I was learning in my classes was a glaring omission to me. When I attended workshops and conferences, some comments made by

Euro-Canadian counsellors about their Indigenous clients made me think there was a real lack of knowledge of Indigenous worldview and culture. One day, I went to a talk about finding a thesis topic that matters. I wanted to do *research that matters*, that came from my heart. I knew then that my research would be in the area of multicultural counselling.

In the summer of 2002, I found myself looking across the room at a group of Inuit men who had been sexually abused by a White man when they were children. I, now a middle-aged White woman, was one of four counsellors hired to deliver an intensive six-week residential trauma treatment program in a treatment facility miles from a midsized northern community. Would these men hate me because I was White, since Euro-Canadians represented so much of what was painful in their lives? Would they dislike me because I was a woman and speaking about sexual abuse with a woman was embarrassing? Would they despise me because I couldn't say or spell their names properly on first try, or for some other reason I would never find out about? Would they even understand what I was saying and how I said it since English was their second language and many had not gone to school beyond grade 4 or 5? Would we ever be able to find enough common ground on which to build a relationship? How could I reach them and show them I was trustworthy enough so that they could share the most painful experiences of their lives with me?

During those six weeks, all my questions were answered in a way that fundamentally changed the way I looked at the counselling process and relationship. Besides the phenomenal gift of having been allowed into the private lives of those courageous, warm, understanding, forgiving men, their parting gift, a plaque, said so much: "I often like to think of you and all the joys we've shared and how nice its been to have a friend like you who really cares."

I left that experience knowing that I wanted to understand more. I wanted to know about the factors that impact the counselling relationship when the counsellor is White and from a European-Canadian background and the client is Indigenous. I wanted to have a better idea about how counsellors could prepare themselves for working with Indigenous clients—what kinds of attitudes, knowledge and skills would they need to bring to the relationship. I also wanted to learn about the kind of counselling environment that would help Indigenous clients feel comfortable and the specific types of interventions that would be considered culturally appropriate and helpful.

This study, then, was a journey of discovery—the discovery of perceiving my cultural lenses and then learning to take off those lenses and try on some new ones. Only by doing that could I begin to contemplate the richness of the Indigenous experience and the patience with which European-Canadians have been treated by this country's original inhabitants. Armed with new eyes, I could more fully see how much European-Canadians could learn from Canada's Indigenous people and how, together, we could develop new understandings that would help us work to correct the injustices of the past. This study is not just about becoming a more sensitive counsellor with Indigenous clients, but about becoming a more sensitive, open, empathetic, non-judgemental person.

Organization of this Thesis

This thesis has six chapters. This introductory chapter serves to introduce the topic, the researcher, and provides a brief explanation of the purpose of the study. The second chapter discusses the relevant literature on the multicultural counselling process and how Indigenous clients may benefit from a more culturally responsive approach to structuring counselling, to relationship building, and to developing interventions. The qualitative research methodology is presented in chapter three. The fourth chapter presents the approved narratives that highlight portions of the Elder-Counsellors' life histories and how their experiences have shaped their perspectives on counselling. Their suggestions for how Euro-Canadian counsellors can work more sensitively with Indigenous clients are also presented. The themes and suggestions that emerged from the Elder-Counsellors' interviews are described in chapter five. These themes address how Euro-Canadian counsellors can adapt the counselling environment, relationship, and intervention process when working with Indigenous clients. The final chapter discusses the knowledge gained from this study and makes recommendations for culturally sensitive counselling when Euro-Canadian counsellors are working with Indigenous clients.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Since the Indigenous population of Canada numbers approximately 1.3 million, it is likely that many Euro-Canadian counsellors will, at some point in their careers, provide counselling services to Indigenous individuals and families. Therefore, it is vital for them to develop the attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to provide culturally responsive counselling to members of this group. To do this, Euro-Canadian counsellors need to understand the central role that culture plays in the lives of both counsellor and client as well as develop insight into how culture impacts the relationship and process of counselling. In the following sections, I discuss what culture is, the essential aspects of culture that may impact relationship building during counselling, what the literature states about multicultural counselling competence, and what researchers have suggested as culturally sensitive approaches to working with Indigenous clients.

Culture and Counselling

Over the past 35 years much has been written about the vital role that culture plays in the counselling process (Pedersen, 1999). It has become such a concern that a movement has arisen suggesting that multicultural counselling is the *fourth force* of psychology after psychodynamic, behavioural and humanistic counselling (Pedersen). This issue has grown in importance in large part because of the demographic changes in population in many of the developed countries of the world and a subsequent concern over making counselling more relevant and appropriate to individuals from minority cultures (Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1993; Axelson, 1999; Pedersen).

Psychology developed in a monoculture and served that culture, which consisted of either middle-class European males or descendents of those Europeans as they dispersed across the globe (Arredondo, 1999; Ivey, 1995; Pedersen, 1999). Pedersen (1999) identified a number of psychological assumptions considered universal across all cultures and argued that these assumptions have been detrimental to understanding the counselling needs and goals of clients from other cultures. For example, he disputes the commonly held assumptions that there is there is a standard of normal behavior and that cultural and historical context is not relevant to functioning, learning, and socialization. He also argues that it is not helpful to assume that the individual is the building block of society and that independence is always desirable, especially when clients come from collectivistic cultures. Finally, he disagrees with the premise that psychologists are the experts in human behavior and that formal counselling is superior to alternative helping networks. These assumptions have resulted in psychologists and counsellors making judgements about the mental health of clients from other cultures without understanding the cultural lenses through which psychology operates (Das, 1995; Pedersen). Arredondo (1999) stated that "many of us often heard that culture was the culprit for one's life condition, that based on scientific research certain cultural groups were genetically inferior, and others were culturally deprived" (p. 102). Therefore, developing a psychology that will meet the needs of those from other cultures became an ethical concern that led to the development of various models of multicultural competency. How counsellors can become more culturally competent and how counselling can be made more culturally appropriate for clients from Indigenous cultures are two questions that will be addressed in this review.

Understanding Culture

One of the difficulties in understanding culture is that we see only the expression of culture, in terms of overt behaviors and roles that guide behavior and ways of being, rather than culture itself (Axelson, 1999). For example, when Indigenous individuals lower their eyes in court they do this as a sign of respect. However, court officials and police often interpret this behavior as a sign of guilt (Ross, 1992). Since different cultures may assign different meanings to similar behaviors, not comprehending the culture of a client could result in serious misunderstandings. In addition, since culture is a dynamic concept closely tied to behavior, aspects of culture will change over time as the environmental context of the cultural group changes (Axelson, 1999; Matsumoto, 2000). Matsumoto (2000) defined culture as a:

> dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms and behaviors, shared by a group but harbored differently by each specific unit within the group, communicated across generations, relatively stable but with the potential to change across time (p. 24).

This definition of culture encompasses a world with infinite number of "groups" that are defined by various circumstances such as socioeconomic level, education level, community, neighborhood, hobbies, family structure as well as the more commonly used descriptors such as race, place of birth, ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexual orientation.

Using such an expansive definition of culture has major implications when considering the counselling process in that it establishes all counselling as multicultural or cross-cultural where the counsellor is different from the client in at least one dimension of culture. Using this definition, then, implies that all counselling is multicultural in some way. Sue (1993) suggested, and it is point worth noting, that when White researchers define culture and multicultural counselling this broadly, it allows them to avoid uncomfortable issues of prejudice and racism. It is not the intention of this study to avoid these issues even though a broad definition of culture is being utilized.

Dimensions of Culture

Axelson (1999) explained that "culture is learned from experiences in the environment and is reflected in the ways of a nation's people and their material and social accumulations" (p. 3). The aspects of culture that are important during counselling sessions therefore are the "social accumulations" of culture—the personal attitudes, beliefs, values and assumptions about life that both the counsellor and client bring to the counselling process (Axelson, 1999). Understanding these dimensions of culture is even more critical when the counsellor is from the dominant society and the client is from a group with minority status, particularly if the dominant culture is individualistic and the other collectivistic (Bernal & Scharron-Del-Rio, 2001; Sato, 1998). The dimensions of culture that will impact counselling process and outcome include worldview, identity development and environmental context.

Worldview. Sue (1978) was the first to emphasize the importance of worldview, which he defined as the way individuals interact with nature, people, things and institutions—in essence with their world. Only by understanding the client's worldview, can counsellors develop a process and goals that are beneficial to a particular client (Brinson, 1996; Sue, 1981). Ibrahim (1991) built on Sue's framework by arguing that worldview is a mediating factor in all counselling interactions and, because of its importance, she developed an assessment tool for determining worldview. She stated that using the Scale to Assess World Views (SAWV; Ibrahim & Kahn, 1987) during the initial client assessment helps the counsellor to understand the client's worldview and the client to understand the issues and problems that are bringing him or her to counselling. This prevents counsellors from stereotyping clients based on group membership and helps tailor interventions to the individual (Ibrahim, 1991).

Arredondo (2002) suggested that the worldview of counsellors has been influenced by the "individualistic, self-directed, and monocultural models we were taught for addressing a client's dilemmas" (p.104) and therefore influences every interaction with clients. Carter (1991) goes further by pointing out that understanding the socio-political and historical context of the client as well as one's own cultural lenses and biases is vital to any real interactions taking place. He stated that "mismatches of cultural values may affect the delivery of mental health and educational services, the communication process and interactional dynamics" (p. 165).

Ethnic identity. Another relevant component of culture that affects the counselling relationship and process is ethnic identity. Phinney (1990) defined ethnic identity "as a complex construct including a commitment and sense of belonging to one's ethnic group, positive evaluation of the group, interest in and knowledge about the group, and involvement in activities and traditions of the group" (p. 146). Smith (1991) went further in her definition by suggesting a broader context for the term ethnic group, which she described as:

> a reference group called upon by people who share a common history and culture, who may be identifiable because they share similar physical features and values and who, through the process of interacting with each other and establishing boundaries with others, identify themselves as being a member of that group. Ethnic identity is the sum total of group members' feelings about those values, symbols and common histories that identify them as a distinct group" (p. 181-182).

Smith (1991) proposed that ethnic identity development proceeds within the context of majority/minority status. She emphasized that humans have an innate need to categorize and label resulting in a separation into groups. The inevitable consequence of this quality is that human beings are regularly separated into groups based on their power within a certain society--with the result that there will always be some status inequality even in egalitarian societies. She suggested that those groups who take up the culture and values of mainstream society are more accepted and those groups who are most unlike mainstream society feel the most isolated and distanced from the power centre (Smith, 1991).

The construct of identity, therefore, is an important one to consider when working cross-culturally. It is not a construct that remains static, however; attitudes will change with time and circumstance and significantly affect how individuals sees themselves and their world as well as how they interact with others, within or from outside their group (Phinney, 1996; Smith, 1991). Ethnic identity is a very salient construct that influences emotional well-being, personality development and ability to achieve one's potential, regardless of whether one has majority or minority status (Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1996; Smith, 1991). It is also important to remember that people have multiple identities and "the ones" that appear most significant at a given period are dependent on historical circumstances, environmental contexts, and the age, sex, class, race, and religious and political beliefs of the individual at a particular moment in time (Tatum, 1997).

Tatum (1997) found that when psychology students were asked which parts of identity captured their attention first, students of color usually mentioned their racial or ethnic group but White students rarely mentioned being White (although some mentioned ethnic connections). She explained that when an individual is a member of a dominant or advantaged social group, this category is "understood" and therefore not mentioned. In addition, what is dominant in a society is considered the norm. What we do notice, she suggested, are those things that set us apart from others. These categories of "otherness" are most often race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, physical and mental ability, religion, and sexual orientation (Tatum, 1997). Most people will have both dominant and "targeted" identities—targeted identities being those that suggest our "otherness." Understanding the importance of ethnic identity is important in that it will be a relationship factor in a counselling dyad where the counsellor is Euro-Canadian and the client from a minority culture. This is an issue that must be addressed early in the process of counselling if rapport is to be established.

Environmental contexts. Understanding the historical and present day environmental contexts of clients is another relevant factor in the counselling process. Particularly critical is an understanding of the impact of colonialism, which has resulted in multigenerational trauma for Indigenous peoples as a result of loss of culture, loss of identity, subjugation, and dehumanization (Arredondo, 2002). McCaskill (1983) described colonialism as "a relationship which leaves one side dependent on the other side to define the world" but this doesn't explain the depth of what happened to Indigenous peoples or why it happened (p. 289).

According to Bodley (1990), industrial civilizations from Europe, which were cultures of consumption, measured progress in terms of attaining more material goods. As the local ability to supply these goods decreased, these civilizations sent out individuals to find them elsewhere. When Europeans landed in Canada and found a huge tract of land inhabited by Indigenous peoples who were living in harmony with their environment and not exploiting their resources, these explorers, and the countries that sent them, felt the land was theirs to take. They not only felt it was their right and duty to utilize the resources of the land, thereby taking it away from the Indigenous peoples who were there, but they also believed they should *rescue and civilize* the local inhabitants by assimilating them and making them active consumers (Bodley).

Whenever the terms colonialism and colonization are used in this thesis, they encompass the devastating intergenerational impacts that Indigenous societies experienced because of government policies aimed at assimilation, destruction of culture and community connections, and the racist attitudes that Europeans, and later Canadians, had towards the original inhabitants of Canada.

The kind of racism that arose out of colonialism, and that implies that Indigenous peoples are inferior, is still pervasive in many of our institutions today. Therefore, it is important for Euro-Canadian counsellors to be aware that psychological therapies can be a kind of colonizing culture that is imposed on those for whom it doesn't fit. Once aware, Euro-Canadian counsellors can make changes to their own attitudes and assumptions and work towards making counselling a more culturally appropriate pursuit.

Multicultural Counselling Competence

Research into the area of multicultural counselling competency suggests that being culturally competent is helpful in understanding and working with clients from other cultures (Arredondo, 1998; Pedersen, 1999; Sue & Sue, 1999; Sue, Arredondo and McDavis, 1992) But how can a counsellor become culturally competent? Two main and opposing perspectives have been suggested, the emic or culturally specific approach as elucidated in the multicultural counselling competencies developed by Sue, Arredondo and McDavis, and the etic or universal approach taken by Patterson (1996) that suggests that general counselling theory and techniques are complete enough to be applicable to any cultural groups found in North America (Essandoh, 1996; Fischer, Jome & Atkinson, 1998; Patterson). A third perspective takes the middle road by emphasizing the importance of the universal healing factors in a culturally sensitive context (Fisher, Jome & Atkinson).

The Multicultural Counselling Competencies Model

The multicultural counselling competencies developed by Sue et al.(1992) are guidelines that are considered essential for counsellors who want to become multi-culturally competent (Arredondo, 1999). Their operational framework is based on a grid that includes beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills and how they interact with the counsellor's awareness of his or her own cultural values and biases, of the client's worldview, and of culturally appropriate intervention strategies (Arredondo & Toporek, 1996).

In the domain of counsellor awareness of one's own cultural values and biases, counsellors need to be culturally self-aware and understand how their cultural history has influenced their attitudes and beliefs (Arredondo & Toporek, 1996). This includes grasping the ways in which they have privilege and understanding how oppression and racism affects the counselling process. Counsellors should be willing to seek out appropriate training and work towards becoming nonracist.

In the domain of counsellor awareness of the client's worldview, it is important for counsellors to be knowledgeable about the historical and environmental context of their clients, understand minority identity development, and what is considered normal behavior and/or help-seeking behavior in a particular culture (Arredondo & Toporek, 1996). Integral to this is an understanding of the socio-political influences that affect the opportunities of those clients. One way to develop skills in this area could consist of becoming actively involved with cultural and community activities and celebrations.

In the third domain, that of utilizing culturally appropriate intervention strategies, counsellors need to respect clients' beliefs, values and language, their healing practices, and their support networks (Arredondo & Toporek, 1996). Being familiar with culture specific community resources and understanding that clients often face discriminatory practices and institutionalised racism are also critical. Culturally competent counsellors need to be skilled in appropriate verbal and nonverbal helping interventions.

Arredondo (1999) stated that because of the development of the multicultural counselling competencies, counsellors will be able to "establish a self-learning agenda to address personal and institutional racism" (p. 103). She also argued that the true test of competency will be revealed at the level of interventions.

The Diversity Model

Patterson (1996), who comes from the etic perspective, has concerns with an approach that overemphasizes cultural diversity and culture specific techniques because:

> this approach ignores the fact that we are rapidly becoming one world, with rapid communication and increasing interrelations among persons from varying cultures, leading to increasing homogeneity and a worldview representing the common humanity that binds all human being together as one species (p. 230).

He suggested that it is the personal qualities of the counsellor and the ability to provide an supportive therapeutic relationship that are the essential components of effective counselling, regardless of the client's cultural group.

The Common Factors Perspective

Fischer, Jome & Atkinson (1998) pointed out that recent research shows that while culturally specific treatments can play a role in counselling, it is the common factors and not the unique interventions that are key to counselling effectiveness. The common factors are those four features that are shared by all therapies and include the therapeutic relationship, a shared worldview, client expectations, and a ritual in which both therapist and client partake that is believed by both to be helpful in resolving the problems. Fischer et al. suggested that it is these common factors, when combined with a thorough knowledge of cultural context that provides the components necessary for effective counselling. They propose that counsellors ask themselves what they need to know about the individual client, about the client's culture and about people in general that will allow them to develop a therapeutic alliance, to discover a shared worldview, to provide a healing environment, and to plan procedures or rituals that both counsellor and client believe will help.

This perspective was supported by a recent study on client perspectives of multicultural competence, which found that the role of the client, the therapeutic relationship and the counselling environment were critical to positive outcomes for the clients and that cultural competence was only relevant to clients who defined their presenting issues as cultural in nature (Pope-Davis et al., 2002). In fact, the research showed that clients perceived counsellors to be more culturally competent if they expressed interest in the client's culture regardless of actual cultural competence. Having said that, the research involved only 10 undergraduate psychology students who attended counselling with counsellors culturally different from themselves. None of the participants were Indigenous. However, seven earlier studies also indicated that culturally responsive counselling was received more positively by clients (Atkinson & Lowe, 1995). Further research into the perceptions of clients is needed to gain a deeper insight into the factors that clients see as being key to a good counselling experience when working cross-culturally.

Developing Multicultural Competence—Ethical and Training Issues

In its *Code of Ethics*, under Principle IV: Responsibility to Society, the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA, 2000) sets out two standards that address multicultural competence for psychologists:

> IV. 15 Acquire an adequate knowledge of the culture, social structure, and customs of a community before beginning any major work there.
>
> IV. 16 Convey respect for and abide by prevailing community mores, social customs, and cultural expectations in their scientific and professional activities, provided that this does not contravene any of the ethical guidelines of this *Code.*

In addition, the *Guidelines for Non-Discriminatory Practice* (CPA, 2001) detail practices for psychologists to follow when working cross-culturally. These include being aware of one's own cultural attitudes; understanding power differences; learning about the cultural norms of other ethnic groups; being cognizant of cultural differences in understanding confidentiality, informed consent and interventions; being willing to reassess one's competence when working with clients from other cultures; and conferring with others who are multiculturally competent.

Are these ethical standards sufficient? Arredondo (1999) explained that the multicultural counselling competencies were developed partially out of a concern that counsellors were calling themselves multi-culturally competent without needing to adhere to a particular set of standards or ethics. In addition, counsellor training was based on a monocultural model of psychology that did not address issues of ethnicity and culture. She suggested that not only were university trained counsellors not able to meet the needs of many ethnic clients, they were participating in "unethical and potentially harmful behavior" (p. 103).

Training to become multi-culturally competent can take many forms. Brinson (1996) suggested that counsellors need to become more involved in "culturally diverse encounters" such as participating in diverse cultural activities, getting involved in community organizations working on social justice issues, and enlarging their circle of friends to include other cultural and ethic groups. Constantine (2002) found that "more multicultural counselling training was associated with greater levels of self-reported multicultural counselling competence" (p. 170). She stated that students exposed to more courses become more aware of themselves as cultural beings and understand the importance of cultural similarities and differences in the counselling process. Das (1995) suggested that instead of counsellor trainees being asked to simply take one multicultural counselling course, that multicultural concepts and aspects of working in a multicultural society should be incorporated into all counselling courses.

Counselling Indigenous Clients

Research has shown that many potential Indigenous clients do not access counselling services available to them or terminate counselling early (French, 1989; Peavy, 1993; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996). This could indicate that there is something about the counselling process, the counselling environment, or counselling interventions that is not meeting the needs of Indigenous clients or it may point to difficulties in the counselling relationship. For example, the severe maltreatment of Indigenous groups by government agencies over hundreds of years has resulted in a distrust of anything supported by the dominant society and this includes counselling, which may be seen as another way of forcing clients to conform to the values of the dominant culture (Carter, 1991; Garrett & Herring, 2001; LaFromboise, Trimble & Mohatt, 1990).

Garrett and Herring (2001) stated that in order to become an effective counsellor with Indigenous clients, the helping professional needs to attain a thorough knowledge of Indigenous history and culture and the issues facing Indigenous groups today. Although counsellors have many years of education, their knowledge of the history of Indigenous people may be limited to what they learned in educational texts written by authors from the dominant culture and what they have seen in movies or on the news. That is why there is still a widespread belief in the dominant culture that many Aboriginal people *have done it to themselves*. Ross (1996) presented the following example in role reversal as a way of illuminating what has happened to Indigenous peoples:

> Imagine a non-Aboriginal mine worker whose job is taken away by all-powerful outsiders. Imagine that he knew he had no realistic chance of ever qualifying for another one. Imagine that he was unable to go for comfort and help to his own churches and his own psychiatrists and hospitals, because those same outsiders made them illegal. Imagine that, whenever he went to their versions of such helping places, the professionals who staffed them could not speak his language,

> but demanded that he learn theirs. Imagine, as well, that all those powerful outsiders held him, his language and his culture in such low esteem that they forcibly removed his children, to raise them to be just like them. (p. 47-48)

Being able to develop an understanding of what it must be like to have one's home, family, language, culture, religion and way of life ripped away is instrumental to becoming competent in working with Indigenous clients. It is vital for counsellors to be able to feel what it must be like to be told repeatedly, generation after generation, that everything you believe in and value has no value and you have no purpose and no future.

What Facilitates Healing for Indigenous Peoples

A great deal of the literature on counselling Indigenous clients comes from the U.S. and is based on suggestions, rather than research, about how to work appropriately with this client group. Most of this U.S. literature does not provide empirical evidence to support this advice, neither is it based on qualitative studies. Before looking at that information, it is important to understand what may facilitate healing for Indigenous individuals.

One Canadian study that looked at this question is the empirically supported doctoral dissertation by McCormick (1994) on the facilitation of healing for First Nations individuals in British Columbia. McCormick interviewed 50 First Nations participants about what facilitated their healing. Using the Critical Incident Technique developed by Flanagan (1954), he found that an effective healing program would include helping Indigenous individuals achieve empowerment, find appropriate methods of cleansing, obtain balance in their lives, acquire greater self-discipline and find ways of belonging. None of these categories, in themselves, point to reasons why Western style counselling may not be found to be beneficial by some Indigenous clients but it does suggest that there are important differences between Indigenous clients and Euro-Canadian clients in culture and worldview and in what they view as helpful and healthful.

McCormick (1994) discussed the Indigenous philosophy of healing as symbolized by the Medicine Wheel and the importance Indigenous peoples place on interconnectedness and balance. The wheel consists of equal parts of a circle that show the four aspects of health: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. His participants identified 14 ways that they facilitated their own healing. Although McCormick doesn't make the connection, they fit well into the four quadrants of the wheel. For example, learning from a role model, setting goals, and gaining an understanding of the problem fit into the mental quadrant; exercise, involvement in challenging activities, and self care could be considered as physical assists to healing; expression of emotion, establishing a social connection, obtaining help/support from others and helping others are emotional components of health, and, aspects that correspond to the spiritual segment include establishing a spiritual connection, participating in ceremony, establishing a connection with nature and anchoring the self in tradition. He concluded that "counsellors could utilize the findings of this study to develop techniques or interventions to help First Nations clients" although he didn't make any suggestions himself (p. 142). It is apparent from his findings that one area where Western counselling may not meet the needs of

Indigenous clients is in the area of helping clients find a spiritual connection. Discussing spirituality with clients has not generally been encouraged in the profession.

Another Canadian study by Kirmayer, Boothroyd, Tanner, Adelson & Robinson (2000) looked at psychological distress among the James Bay Cree of Quebec. Interview data for this study was extracted from a health survey of Cree individuals from northern Quebec, aged 15 to 85, and consisted of 1135 respondents. The researchers found that a large protective factor for minimizing stress was time spent in the bush, which resulted in feelings of well being. Living in the bush increased family cohesion and social support, reinforced cultural identity, aided physical health through the eating of "country food" and exercise, and allowed families time away from the pressures of community life, alcohol, and violence. This study is important for counsellors as it demonstrates the importance of assisting clients to either enhance or at least maintain traditional cultural values and activities. However, the study only examined time spent in the bush and not other traditional activities such as sweat lodge ceremonies and other healing practices. In addition, the findings may not be generalizable to Indigenous groups who are less isolated from mainstream culture.

Does Western Style Counselling fit?

The articles and book chapters most readily available about counselling Indigenous clients come from counsellors and professors who work with Indigenous peoples in the U.S. Some identify themselves as Indigenous. However, most of the information is not based on either quantitative or qualitative research.

A number of articles explain that Indigenous groups tend to have a different view of counselling than the dominant society and believe that psychological well-being is based on spiritual balance—on being in harmony with the universe (Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Garrett & Herring, 2001; LaFromboise et al., 1990). LaFromboise et al. suggested that there is a belief that psychological problems are associated with human weakness and the inability to maintain accepted cultural and community standards. Garrett and Carroll, however, described illness as resulting from one's energies being unfocused, from not pursuing the path that one is meant to follow. "Well-being occurs when we seek and find our unique place in the universe and experience the continuous cycle of receiving and giving through respect and reverence for the beauty of all living things" (p. 381).

Restoring well-being, then, is accomplished through ritual, atonement, community reintegration, and spiritual renewal (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Garrett & Carroll, 2000; LaFromboise et al., 1990). Many of these processes involve communal rather than individual practices and reflect the collective aspect of Indigenous worldview. This is far different from the goals of conventional Western psychotherapy, which are focused on the individual and emphasize intrapsychic change. Sato (1998) suggested that therapeutic change in Western psychotherapy occurs when a client develops control over the self and environment, and therapeutic change in collectivistic cultures occurs when the client is able to merge or develop communion with the environment. Since most counselling practices developed from a middle-class European perspective and address the issues that concern clients from that culture and belief system, this is not a good fit for Indigenous clients (Herring, 1996; Lee & Armstrong, 1995). Garrett & Herring (2001) explained that Indigenous individuals who have attended Western style counselling have expressed concerns over the biases inherent in commonly used psychological methods. “This incompatibility between conventional counselling approaches and Indigenous approaches constitutes a cultural variance that may hinder effective counselling by the culturally unaware professional” (p. 149). Axelson (1999) stated that “when cross-cultural differences are not explored or their real meanings and implications understood, there is a danger of inaccurate, overgeneralized or derogatory stereotypes” (p 87). He explained that misrepresentation has occurred for hundreds of years and continues today in the way that Indigenous peoples are portrayed in the media, in everyday conversation and in the counselling process.

Researchers have found that in order to provide helpful services to Indigenous individuals, helping professionals need to be knowledgeable about Indigenous culture and worldview (Garrett & Herring, 2001). Ross (1992), who is Euro-Canadian, suggested that many people from the dominant culture have not recognized, let alone tried to discover and familiarize themselves with, the differences in culture that exist between Indigenous peoples and Euro-Canadians. Some significant aspects of Indigenous worldview that have been identified as important include living in harmony with oneself, other beings, nature, and the Creator. Also key is sharing, being cooperative, not interfering in the lives of others, and valuing family and community, especially Elders (Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Garrett & Herring, 2001; Garrett & Wilbur, 1999; Herring, 1996; Ross, 1992; Sue & Sue, 1999). Together these values illuminate the spiritual belief that all things are connected (Garrett & Wilbur, 1999). Ross (1992) explained this as an understanding of life as a process in which "every person is a 'thing-which-is-becoming' as opposed to a 'thing-which-is'" (p.163-164).

Part of Indigenous worldview is reflected in differences in communication styles between those from a Euro-Canadian background and those who are Indigenous. Communication style includes not only how something is communicated but also what can be communicated. Garrett and Garrett (1994) explained that often Indigenous people speak softly, take more time to reflect before speaking, are not confrontational and are careful about what they communicate. Ross (1992) stated that for many Indigenous individuals, Euro-Canadians say far too much, too fast, and have little understanding about the correct way of speaking to show proper respect (without direct eye contact). He went on to explain that historically there was a survival advantage for Indigenous peoples in not showing anger or other strong emotions (or even feeling them) and in sitting back and observing without speaking when put into new situations. This gave them time to assess what course or action would be most beneficial to their own or the group's survival. Counsellors, however, would often interpret this as being uncooperative and resistant to wanting help (Ross, 1992).

Another aspect of difference that needs to be taken into consideration when counselling is cultural identity. The term Indigenous refers to many different peoples with a variety of histories, distinct customs, diverse languages, who lived and live in various environments with distinctive lifestyles and family groupings (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Garrett & Herring, 2001; Ross, 1992). Garrett and Herring (2001) emphasized that "this diversity exists not only between members of different tribes but also among members within a single tribe" and that it is very important for counsellors to very careful about making assumptions about cultural identity (p.148). Choney, Berryhill-Paapke and Robbins (1995) suggested that racial identity models may not be a good fit when trying to understand the identity development of Indigenous individuals because these models suggest a homogeneity among groups that does not exist. These researchers prefer the concept of acculturation, "which refers to the degree to which the individual accepts and adheres to both majority and tribal cultural values" (p. 76). They suggest that becoming familiar with the individual's cultural identity involves determining the level of acculturation, where the person lives (on reserve or in a rural or urban setting) and the specific cultural beliefs and worldview of the individual (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Garrett & Herring, 2001; LaFromboise et al., 1990).

Garrett and Herring (2001) identified five levels of acculturation: traditional, marginal, bicultural, assimilated and pantraditional and stated that the level of acculturation may affect willingness to attend counselling. They suggested that those individuals who are marginal, meaning they don't feel comfortable in either their traditional or the mainstream culture, may have the most conflict and crisis about identity while those who are bicultural have a high degree of resiliency and have a strong sense of themselves.

An understanding of how ethnic or cultural identity develops has important implications for the development of a therapeutic counselling relationship between a Euro-Canadian counsellor and Indigenous client. Phinney (1996) explained that ethnic identity development proceeds differently for members of ethnic minorities as compared to those who identify themselves as White or of European-background, primarily because of the long history of unequal distribution of power in North America. Therefore, some individuals will identify strongly with a particular ethnic group while others will feel confused and conflicted about their ethnicity and still others would prefer to belong to a different group.

In addition to understanding the cultural identity development of the client, it is vital for the counsellor to understand his or her own cultural identity development. A Canadian study that investigated the experience and perceptions of White male counsellors who work with Indigenous clients, found that, over time, the counsellors became more self-reflective about their own cultural identity, particularly their beliefs, values, and the privilege associated with being White (Smith & Morrissette, 2001). The researchers, who interviewed five counsellors for the study, found that the counsellors had limited cultural knowledge when beginning their counselling work. It was only over time that they developed a better understanding of Indigenous worldview and the historical context of their clients' lives. These factors slowed the development of rapport and trust between client and counsellor. As one counsellor explained: "Developing trusting relationships was particularly challenging. Being White carried meaning into the counselling relationship that could not be ignored" (p. 79). This study pointed out the importance of counsellors understanding the history of Indigenous peoples before starting to work with Indigenous clients although it did not identify effective ways of working with Indigenous clients.

Chung and Bemak (2002) suggested that majority culture counsellors working in cross cultural situations need cultural empathy, which is the ability to retain one's own cultural identity while understanding and accepting "the cultural values and beliefs of the client" (p. 156). Cultural empathy brings the counsellor into the world of the client and helps the counsellor to perceive each client as an individual and interpret the client's specific cultural cues and messages (Chung & Bemak, 2002). Ibrahim (1991) stated that being able to convey cultural empathy may be the essential variable in connecting with minority clients. Hanna, Bemak and Chung (1999) proposed that wisdom may be a variable that influences the effectiveness of a multicultural counsellor. They defined wisdom as:

> a particular set of cognitive and affective traits that are directly related to the possession and development of life skills and understanding necessary for living a life of well-being, fulfilment, effective coping, and insight into the nature of self, others, environment, and interpersonal interactions. (p. 126)

Since wisdom is highly valued in Indigenous cultures as demonstrated through respect of Elders and spiritual leaders, this may be an important component for Euro-Canadian counsellors to demonstrate when working with Indigenous clients.

Effective Approaches to use with Indigenous Clients

After having learned whatever can be learned about the culture, history, worldview, and identity development of Indigenous peoples as well as coming to understand the effects of colonization, racism and prejudice, counsellors need to put aside what has been learned and then be open to developing further and perhaps new "understandings" when in a live interaction with a client (Herring, 1994; Thomason, 1991). This is important in preventing a counsellor from assuming a particular client will adhere to specific cultural values and beliefs and will prevent stereotyping (Atkinson & Lowe, 1995).

There is some debate in the literature as to whether a directive or a more egalitarian approach is the most effective counselling style to use with Indigenous clients. Atkinson and Lowe (1995), in a literature review article, were only able to find one study that asked Indigenous individuals for their preference of a directive or facilitative counsellor. That study, by Dauphinais, Dauphinais and Rowe (1981), found that counsellors using a directive approach were perceived to be more credible and approachable by Indigenous high school students. In contrast, more recent research by Bichsel and Mallinckrodt (2001) found that "contrary to expectations based on previous studies, all groups in our study preferred a generally nondirective counselling style" (p. 872). In the Bichsel and Mallinckrodt study, 218 Indigenous women living on an Oregon reserve were surveyed about their "preferences for counsellor sex, ethnicity, cultural awareness, counselling style and commitment to Indigenous or Anglo-American culture" (p. 858). For the purposes of the study, participants were first asked to rate their cultural commitment. Then, they were invited to identify preferred counsellor attributes on the basis of reading scenarios that depicted an interaction between a certain kind of counsellor and a client. They identified their preferences on a Likert scale. At least one aspect of the research was flawed in that it asked participants to choose between a culturally sensitive counsellor and a culturally insensitive counsellor. It is unlikely that anyone would choose to go to or continue with a culturally insensitive counsellor. This study did confirm what a number of other U.S. articles also suggested—that a non-directive, collaborative style of counselling was more appropriate when working with Indigenous clients (Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Herring, 1997).

Another question in counselling Indigenous clients is that of counsellor self-disclosure. No studies examining counsellor self-disclosure with Indigenous clients were found although it has been mentioned as being helpful in some U.S. articles (Atkinson & Lowe, 1995; Thomason, 1991).

Garrett and Garrett (1994) offered a number of recommendations to counsellors working with Indigenous clients. They suggested that counsellors be polite, respectful and understand that there may be differences in communication style. They indicated that modelling self-disclosure through short stories and using metaphors and imagery may be helpful. They also reminded counsellors to consider the spiritual dimension of the client's experience and life and to take a learner rather than professional stance.

Herring (1997) also provided suggestions to help make the counselling environment more conducive to development of a therapeutic relationship. He recommended that the issue of culture and diversity be discussed openly and that the counsellor needs to demonstrate respect for the client's culture and worldview. He also pointed out that counsellors should try to be flexible around scheduling sessions, who attends sessions, and where counselling takes place. He agreed that utilizing story-telling and metaphor may be beneficial and that it is important to provide options that are practical but not to be directive and give advice.

Garrett and Herring (2001) explained that to be truly effective working with Indigenous clients, counsellors may need to take a more proactive approach than just providing counselling. They may "need to become systemic change agents, intervening in environments that impede the development of Native peoples" (p. 150). In addition, it is very important for counsellors to be open to cultural differences and differences in values, beliefs and goals and to respect their clients by not trying to change their worldview. Counsellors need to engage in counselling with a willingness to learn. Garrett and Garret (1994) explain that "if counsellors and educators come first as students, and second, as professionals, they might be surprised at how much growth would take place by members of both worlds" (p. 143).

Overall, these recommendations and suggestions are supported by a Canadian study that investigated how to make counselling more helpful to Indigenous students (Peavy, 1993). The qualitative study, and subsequent report, was completed for the B.C. government's Department of Aboriginal Education. Interviews were conducted with 60 *informants* from four groups: (a) Aboriginal students and former students, (b) Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal counsellors, (c) home school support workers, and (d) others including parents, principals, and others concerned. Unfortunately, the report doesn't identify how many came from each group.

Peavy (1993) developed a counsellor profile that pointed out the importance of counsellors being either Indigenous or bi-cultural (which was defined as "one who is at home in each culture"). Counsellors should also have knowledge of the cultural diversity exhibited by Indigenous students to prevent stereotyping as well as understand the importance of relationship in Indigenous culture. In addition, a competent counsellor needs to be aware of the socio-economic, socio-political and other environmental factors that Indigenous students and their families face. The qualities of a culturally competent counsellor would include awareness of his or her own assumptions and beliefs, having some sort of spiritual connection, having personally experienced prejudice and being open and accepting. Peavy recommended that counselling be holistic, personal, informal, active and engaging. In addition, counsellors should promote cultural activities, utilize storytelling and non-intrusive listening, and bring spirituality into the counselling process. This study stated very clearly that it "is not acceptable for non-Native individuals who have only superficial knowledge of Native culture, or no knowledge at all, to act as counsellors for First Nations students and their families." (p. 1, Section 6.7)

The Focus and Significance of This Inquiry

The majority of literature on multicultural counselling states that understanding the worldview and culture of a particular client is necessary to being effective and competent as a counsellor. In fact, it has been suggested that it may be unethical to work with a specific client group without having explicit cultural knowledge and awareness. This may be even more valid in situations where the counsellor is from the dominant culture and the client is from a culture that was colonized by that dominant group.

Although the literature provides counsellors with information on ways to work with American Indigenous clients, very little research has been done in Canada to determine whether these suggestions apply equally here. While research by McCormick (1994) provided information on the strategies Indigenous individuals use to overcome life difficulties, he made no suggestions that would help counsellors to structure counselling in a culturally appropriate manner, or assist them to develop therapeutic relationships, or tailor interventions that would be helpful as they work with Indigenous clients. Kirmayer et al. (2000) stated that some Indigenous individuals found cultural and spiritual renewal by living in the bush, but provided no recommendations for counsellors on how to support Indigenous clients to find well-being in other environments.

Of the studies examining counsellor competence when working with Indigenous clients, Smith and Morrissette (2001) supported the importance of prior cultural awareness and knowledge for Euro-Canadian counsellors but did not discuss what kind of environment Indigenous clients might find conducive for healing. Peavy (1993) developed a counsellor profile that detailed the qualities, knowledge and skills that are important for school counsellors working with Indigenous students but made no mention of modifying the structure of counselling so it would fit better with the culture and worldview of Indigenous clients.

This study focuses on three key gaps in the multicultural competence of Euro-Canadian counsellors working with Indigenous clients. It examines how to: (a) provide a supportive counselling environment for Indigenous clients working to find balance and well-being; (b) develop a more therapeutic relationship through better understanding of Indigenous worldview and culture; and (c) adopt the kinds of approaches and interventions that are most supportive and helpful. The overarching question guiding this study is: What can Euro-Canadian counsellors do to provide their Indigenous clients with counselling that is culturally sensitive, appropriate and helpful?

It is important to recognize that the primary source of wisdom and knowledge in Indigenous culture has been—and continues to be—the Elders of the community. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith (1999) stated that "story-telling, oral histories, the perspectives of Elders and of women have become an integral part of all Indigenous research" (p. 144). Therefore, this study drew on the wisdom of Indigenous Elder-Counsellors from Canada, who also have knowledge of Western counselling perspectives, to provide suggestions for how Euro-Canadian counsellors can make counselling more beneficial for Indigenous clients.

CHAPTER III

PROCESS OF THE INQUIRY

The objectives of this inquiry included: (1) gaining a deeper understanding of how Euro-Canadian counsellors can work more sensitively with Indigenous clients, (2) coming to appreciate how Indigenous worldview may affect the counselling relationship and counselling process in Indigenous client/Euro-Canadian counsellor dyads, and (3) developing more insight into the kinds of counselling environments and counselling interventions that would be most supportive of problem resolution. This chapter describes how this study was conducted and explains the rationale for the methodology used. Qualitative data was elicited through interviews with Indigenous Elder-Counsellors in order to provide rich descriptions of culturally appropriate counselling approaches that Euro-Canadian counsellors might find helpful when working with Indigenous clients.

Developing the Design

Conducting research within a cross-cultural context is more complex than research conducted within the researcher's culture because the researcher needs to consider his or her own cultural lenses and be cautious about voice appropriation. There is a potential for misunderstanding through misinterpreting what participants are trying to convey (Piquemal, 2001; Smith, 1999; Sparks, 2002; Sue, 1993). The situation is even more delicate when the researcher is from the dominant culture (Euro-Canadian) and is working with a colonized group, such as Canada's Indigenous peoples, because in the history of relationships between the two groups, Indigenous peoples have not had a voice. Brayboy & Deyhle (2000) caution researchers to be cognizant of their position in relation to their participants and to be careful not to impose ways of collecting, analyzing and disseminating data that are not culturally sensitive. Sparks (2002) suggested that cross-cultural researchers use methodologies that don't distort the voices of those being researched. This includes appropriate data gathering and analysis techniques. In fact, she stated that researchers from the dominant culture have an ethical responsibility to disrupt the "networks of power" so that the voices of the marginalized can be heard.

Research with Indigenous Peoples

Smith (1999) in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* is critical of Western research with Indigenous peoples in that it has been "profoundly exploitive". She states that Westerners believe that: "Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings"(p. 56). Her concern is that since "academic writing is a form of selecting, arranging and presenting knowledge" that it be done carefully so it doesn't continue a tradition of rendering Indigenous voices "invisible or unimportant" (p. 36). She suggested that:

> The methodologies and methods of research, the theories that inform them, the questions which they generate and the writing styles they employ, all become significant acts which need to be considered carefully and critically before being applied. In other words they need to be 'decolonized' (p. 39).

For Smith, this means understanding theory and research from an Indigenous perspective and using research to further Indigenous self-determination.

Out of a concern not to replicate methods that would be considered dubious by Indigenous researchers, I decided to identify and utilize methodology and procedures that would honour the participants and that would attempt not to distort the information they conveyed. After much thought and after consulting existing Indigenous research, it seemed appropriate to use a qualitative design so that data could be collected via the culturally-accepted method of interviews, and presented in a holistic manner, through approved narratives and the relating of common and unique themes. Long and Dickason (2000) explained that using a qualitative research design that delves into the individual experiences and stories of Indigenous people "fleshes out our understanding of human life" and "challenges readers to reflect critically on the role of all storytellers and the validity of their stories" (p. 7).

The Suitability of Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research has a number of characteristics that make it an appropriate and recommended method for conducting multicultural counselling research (Morrow, Rakhsha & Castañeda, 2001; Pope-Davis, Liu, Toporek & Brittan-Powell, 2001). These include the asking of research questions that cannot be answered using quantitative methods and the ability to explore constructs that have not been studied before. It also allows for inclusion of the participants' life contexts and attempts to illuminate how participants make meaning of their experiences. These characteristics may make qualitative multicultural counselling research a somewhat political and controversial undertaking as it might uncover limitations and biases in conventional counselling approaches. These approaches are based on the European and American contexts in which they originated. Therefore, care needs to be taken to ensure that the voices of the participants are heard strongly and clearly (Morrow et al.). In addition, Morrow et al. remind us that in cross-cultural counselling research, the researcher has a role in setting the path and the pace of the research, but it is the participants who are instrumental in moving the research along and in influencing the themes that emerge.

A qualitative design allows the researcher to gain an understanding of experiences from the participant's point of view—the phenomenological perspective (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Morrow et al., 2001). It also provides a better opportunity for the researcher to develop an emic or insider's perspective since understandings are checked with participants to see if the researcher is comprehending meanings appropriately (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). This is crucial in a cross-cultural situation where dialogue arises out of one's cultural experience and worldview and could be easily misinterpreted (Matsumoto, 2000). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' Report (1996) acknowledged the difficulty that sometimes occurs in intercultural dialogue when Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals communicate:

> All sorts of misunderstandings can arise simply because the partners speak and act in accordance with their particular predispositions and expectations, which are not necessarily shared or even understood by the other party (p. 693).

Merriam (1998) suggested that a qualitative researcher needs to be comfortable with ambiguity, needs to have sensitivity to the context of what is being studied, needs to have warmth and empathy, and needs to have good communication skills such as interviewing, listening and writing ability. Levi-Strauss (1966, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) described the qualitative researcher as a bricoleur—a jack-of-all-trades who uses whatever tools and methods are appropriate to find meaning, interpret meaning and produce research that is meaningful and practical. The researcher can use existing tools and methods or can create new ones resulting in research that is alive and responsive to new understandings and interpretations (Crotty, 1998).

Choosing a Case Study Design

Armed with this understanding, the qualitative research design chosen as most appropriate to examine the research questions was the multiple or collective case study approach (Stake, 2000). According to Merriam (1998), case studies are particularistic in that they focus on a specific topic or situation. They are descriptive for the end product is a thick description of the topic being studied. They are also heuristic because they help the reader develop insights into the phenomenon that were not known before (Merriam, 1998). Stake (1995) noted that the defining feature of a case study is that the knowledge acquired is different from other types of qualitative research in that it is more concrete, more contextual, is expanded upon by the reader to fit his/her circumstances, and it refers to a particular population. In addition, analysis can be made across multiple cases. Stake (2000) suggested that a collective case design is used when the researcher is interested in trying to shed light on a particular concept and that particular cases may be chosen to provide parallels or diversity. The end result is to gain a deeper understanding of the topics of interest and develop common themes or to draw out differences.

The use of a case study method allowed the researcher to develop an understanding of Indigenous Elder-Counsellors' personal and professional experiences and worldviews and how these shaped their counselling perspectives. It also enabled the researcher to place their suggestions for culturally sensitive counselling with Indigenous clients in the context of these experiences. Each Elder-Counsellor's wisdom and guidance relating to the counselling process could be presented in a holistic and culturally appropriate manner through the writing of "narratives" derived from the interview transcripts.

Developing the narratives. Johnson-Bailey (2004) suggested that narratives are the ideal method for delving into and coming to understand the lives of the *Other*, those who have been marginalized and whose voices and knowledge have not been widely heard. She goes on to explain that narrative is responsive to communication differences and minimizes power disparities.

Polkinghorne (1995) defined a narrative as a story with a plot and a beginning, middle, and end. He describes the subject of stories as human action that attempts to progress toward a solution, that clarifies or that unravels an incomplete situation. Forming the interview data into narratives that detail Elder-Counsellor's lives and counselling suggestions provides readers the opportunity to perceive connectedness and cohesion across participants' stories, which is a very culturally appropriate way of representing the words and ideas of Indigenous Elder-Counsellors (Kramp, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1995). Peat (2002) explained that Euro-Canadian society has much to learn from listening to the stories of Elders. He described the power of the stories as emanating from the Indigenous way of watching and learning:

> When Native people speak they are not talking from the head, relating some theory, mentioning what they read in a book, or what someone else has told them. Rather, they speak from the heart, from the traditions of their people, and from the knowledge of their land; they speak of what they have seen and heard and touched, and of what has been passed on to them by the traditions of their people. (Peat, p.75)

Bruner (1985) explained that 'narrative cognition', a distinct yet legitimate way of knowing about the world, is discrepant from the rational discourse venerated as truthful in the Western tradition. This worldview or way of knowing and way of constructing reality is understood by Indigenous groups (Cajete, 2000). Kramp (2004) explained that in narrative inquiry the research participant is acknowledged as the one who knows and tells. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the *knowers* and *storytellers* involved in this study, and on how their stories were shared and collaboratively illuminated.

Participants

I searched for five Indigenous Elders, who also have training in Western counselling perspectives, to shed light on how the counselling process and environment could be responsive to the needs of Indigenous clients. Waldram (1997a) explained that the status of Elder "is ambiguous and never clearly defined" (p.109), but that the standard of acceptance is whether others identify a person as an Elder. "Most Elders will have difficulty describing themselves as Elders, as this is culturally inappropriate" (p. 110).

Waldram stated that Indigenous individuals with life experience, wisdom, empathy, and who lead a balanced lifestyle may be identified as Elders by others and may be approached for help with various personal problems. In addition, some Elders have gained the knowledge and have received permission to lead ceremonies.

A study criterion was that the Elders needed to have Western counselling experience so that they would have an understanding of common counselling environments, interventions and the terminology used in the Western tradition and could therefore speak to how Euro-Canadian counsellors could make counselling a more helpful experience for Indigenous clients. Elder-Counsellors were referred by other helping professionals who identified them because they are respected and valued helpers.

It was the intention of this study to interview Elder-Counsellors from different communities and who represent a variety of Indigenous cultural traditions. However, it must be understood that interviewing five Elder-Counsellors may or may not represent the perspectives of other Indigenous Elders or all Indigenous communities. Elder-Counsellor interviewees were asked to identify themselves as a member of a particular Indigenous culture but were not asked to provide proof of their identity. Phinney (1996) suggested that it is most appropriate to ask individuals how they understand and interpret their own identity. Frideres (1993) in a discussion of Indigenous identity in Canada states that the "identity of the individual lies in his/her conceptualization of self. We can attempt to measure this self-conceptualization in some form, but all it tells us is the degree to which an individual feels Native" (p. 21). He goes on to explain that Indigenous identity is complex and includes not only an individual's legal identity (as in Band membership), but also all aspects of the person's cultural and social identity.

The reason that Elder-Counsellors were asked to participate rather than Indigenous counsellors of any age was because, in the Indigenous worldview, Elders are authorized by their communities to share some of their knowledge (Graveline, 1998; Peat, 2002; Piquemal, 2001). However, it is important to understand that in spite of being able to share some knowledge, not all knowledge can be shared, especially specific knowledge of ritual and ceremony (Piquemal, 2001). In addition, the Indigenous ethic of non-interference does not allow for advice giving, which is considered interference in the lives of others (Brant, 1990). Keeping this in mind, the researcher was acutely aware that the suggestions and advice for Euro-Canadian counsellors working with Indigenous clients would be presented tentatively, and often indirectly, out of respect for others. Peat (2002) explained that "when Native Elders want to make a point…they tell a personal story and leave their audience to make the necessary connections and understand how the story illustrates and illuminates the issue in question" (p. 72-73).

Making a Connection

Qualitative research with Indigenous participants is about the "relationship" (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996). The process of recruitment included the development of relationships with the Elder-Counsellors and resulted in participants gaining an understanding of who I am and why this study was important to me. This knowledge expanded into an understanding of how other Euro-Canadian counsellors, who work with Indigenous clients, could benefit from the information gathered. Piquemal (1999) stated that trust and motivation are vital when developing a research relationship with Indigenous participants:

> Trust entails the researcher trying to understand and respect people and their beliefs. But trust is also based on whether or not participants believe that the research is going to serve a good purpose and whether the researcher may be concealing anything from the participants (p. 82).

Without the development of trust and rapport, there would be no data collection and no final thesis. This research therefore became a collaborative effort with the research participants becoming active co-researchers (Piquemal, 2001). Smith (1999) explained that the word 'respect' is very powerful among Indigenous peoples and emphasizes the importance of 'relationship' and being human: "Through respect the place of everyone and everything in the universe is kept in balance and harmony. Respect is a reciprocal, shared, constantly interchanging principle which is expressed through all aspects of social conduct" (p. 120).

Informed Consent

The process of obtaining free and informed consent became part of the invitation to participate in the research study and continued throughout the course of the study. Piquemal (2001) stated:

> Collaboration is necessary in order for researchers and participants to reach an agreement in regard to the nature and purpose of the research and to the ways in which the research should be conducted. Such agreement starts prior to seeking free and informed consent and should enable participants and researchers to learn

> to relate to one another and to the inquiry in ways that are meaningful to them (p. 75).

My willingness to be open about my cultural background, worldview and life experiences and to be collaborative throughout the research process and in the writing of the narratives, by checking back with participants for approval, was instrumental to having participants agree to participate in the study.

Finding the Elder-Counsellors

Names of Elders, who have worked or work as counsellors, and who have Western counselling training, were provided to the researcher from among her professional contacts. They were recruited through a series of phone calls, emails and meetings to discuss the study, its value, and the time commitment required, and to see if the Elder-Counsellors were interested in becoming involved. Potential Elder-Counsellors were provided with an information sheet that provided details of the study (see Appendix A for study information sheet).

The Elder-Counsellors who agreed to participate included a Mohawk Elder, originally from Ontario, who is a traditional healer and addictions counsellor, an Inuit Elder and addictions counsellor who lives in Nunuvut, a Métis Elder from Alberta who specializes in working with children, a Cree Elder with Métis status who is a traditional healer and is now completing a Master's in Social Work at a university in Western Canada, and a Cree professor originally from a small community in Manitoba. Their personal backgrounds, experiences and the wisdom they shared will be described in the following chapter through approved narratives.

Interview Process

Completion of all interviews took place on a date and at a location agreed to by both the Elder-Counsellor and researcher and took between one and two hours. Although verbal consent had already been obtained prior to the Elder-Counsellors agreeing to participate and before the interview time was arranged, informed consent was again discussed prior to the signing of the informed consent form. The form detailed the nature and purpose of the study, the methods for ensuring confidentiality and how the conveyed information would be used. It also made clear that participation was voluntary and withdrawal from the study was permissible at any time without penalty (see Appendix B for the informed consent form).

The researcher explained that the interviews would be audiotaped and the tapes sent for verbatim transcription. It was also explained that the transcriber would be bound by a confidentiality agreement and would not have access to the interviewees' real names unless interviewees' decided to use their real names in the study. All five Elder-Counsellors decided to choose a name or used their Indigenous names to represent themselves in the study.

Interview Style

Since asking question after question could be viewed as disrespectful by some Indigenous individuals, a more culturally appropriate style of interviewing called reflexive interviewing was used for data collection (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996). Rather than asking specific interview questions, data was collected through conversations around several topics of interest. Yin (1994) explained that an experienced interviewer would be able to see opportunities as they arise in the conversation and could therefore delve further into topics of interest.

The topics. The interview began with an invitation to the Elder-Counsellor to share what he or she felt was appropriate and necessary information about his or her background and work, involvement in traditional culture and understanding and knowledge of Western style counselling. Following the collection of this demographic, background and contextual information, the researcher and Elder-Counsellor had a conversation around various topics that included:

1. A discussion around a culturally appropriate environment or setting that promotes healing. For example, is a Western-style counselling environment conducive to change? This could include places to meet with clients, how long and how often, and who should be invited to the meetings.
2. A discussion around the relationship between client and counsellor (including development of rapport, ways of speaking and being that would be most helpful, what kind of relationship would the client find most helpful).
3. A discussion around culture (how should worldview and acculturation be raised, discussing Indigenous healing approaches, and the importance of the counsellor participating in Indigenous cultural activities).
4. Appropriate ways of conducting the first session.
5. The kinds of interventions that would feel appropriate to the client for a few common problems, for example addictions, family violence and depression.
6. How best to deal with angry or silent clients.

7. How University programs can help students become more competent in working with Indigenous clients.
8. Appropriate ways of ending sessions and ending counselling.

Collecting the data. Upon completion of the interviews, the audiotapes were sent for verbatim transcription and then the transcription was checked against the tapes by the researcher. Each transcribed interview was reviewed with the particular Elder-Counsellor during follow-up phone calls, which were recorded, or emails, that were kept for reference. After looking at and attempting to understand the data collected, the researcher journeyed backwards on the hermeneutic circle (the backward arc) to look for topics covered by one Elder-Counsellor and not others and other possible gaps in the data (Ellis, 1998). Further communication with the Elder-Counsellors was initiated through a second interview or email for clarification of emerging ideas and to address new topics stemming from interviews with other Elder-Counsellors. Piquemal (2001) describes this "going back" to the source of the information as a means of ensuring its accuracy and the continued right to use the knowledge.

Conducting in-depth interviews and checking back with participants provided the researcher with a number of opportunities to develop a deeper relationship with the Elder-Counsellors, as well as gave them occasions to gain more insight into the experiences and perspective of the researcher. This allowed for the development of rapport and trust over time and provided opportunities for the researcher to demonstrate continued trustworthiness and sincerity (Merriam, 1998). Stake (2000) stated that "qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (p. 447).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This study was truly a collaborative effort that included ongoing dialogue with the Elder-Counsellors. The data included not only the original interview transcripts, but also emails and phone calls made for clarification. In the first step in the data analysis process, the researcher examined the Elder-Counsellors' interview transcripts and constructed a personalized narrative for each one of them. The narratives focused on the Elder-Counsellors' personal and professional background experiences that informed their current perspectives on counselling, as well as their tentative suggestions for culturally sensitive counselling when Euro-Canadian counsellors are working with Indigenous clients. The narrative approach of Johnson-Bailey (2004) informed the construction of the Elder-Counsellors' stories. The second step involved taking each narrative back to the Elder-Counsellor for feedback and suggested changes. The narratives were conveyed to them as email attachments based on their personal preferences for reviewing them. The researcher then made follow-up phone calls to solicit feedback. The third step in the data analysis process involved making the requested changes to the narratives and then presenting them to the Elder-Counsellors for their approval. The fourth and final step involved synthesizing information across all of the Elder-Counsellors' interview transcripts and narratives to generate common themes about the counselling environment, relationship and interventions. The common themes were derived by initially searching for salient or repeated ideas emerging in each Elder-Counsellor's interview with supporting quotes, and then by grouping similar ideas in a cross-participant analysis (Merriam, 1998).

Issues of Reliability, Validity and Generalizability

Merriam (2002) stated that reliability, the probability that different researchers would find the same results or that the results would be the same over time, is a problem in social science research because human behavior is never static. What is more important in qualitative research is "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (p. 27). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that although reliability is not the main concern of qualitative research, it is important that "the results makes sense—they are consistent and dependable" (p 288). Ensuring consistency and dependability can be accomplished through the same methods commonly used to assess validity.

Lincoln and Guba (2000) stated that one of the concerns about validity has to do with the rigor of our interpretations. This addresses whether "our co-created constructions" can "be trusted to provide some purchase on some important human phenomenon" (p. 179). Merriam (2002) explained that one strategy for ensuring validity is using "member checks" or confirming the researcher's understandings with the participants. These checks were used throughout this study. Keewatin (2002) in her dissertation on finding a balanced way of conducting research with Indigenous groups suggested that:

> One true measure of validity is to take the words back to the speaker and ask for validation. If the participant has changed over the course of the research and no longer

identifies with their comments or wishes to clarify them, then they are the best judges of that growth (p. 27).

Keewatin also wonders whether integrity, rather than validity, may be a more important concept in an Indigenous research paradigm. She suggests that research conducted with integrity and in a sacred and respectful manner will be research that is balanced and therefore helpful in that it touches the hearts of others (Keewatin, 2002). My concern in this study was to consistently respect the participants and their words and to ensure that every step I took would honor our relationship and reflect their trust in me. My commitment was to reveal each Elder-Counsellor holistically and contextually, in the form of a narrative, rather than to just complete a thematic analysis of what they shared.

Using multi-methods, or triangulation, also helps qualitative researchers to capture a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In this study, triangulation consisted of gathering multiple sources of data (from five Elder-Counsellors) and comparing their data with what already exists in the literature and historical records (Merriam, 2002). Lincoln & Guba (2000) suggested that validity criteria for qualitative researchers should revolve around fairness and authenticity. They describe fairness as the inclusion in the text of all the stakeholders "voices"; this means that those who are characterized in the study (the participants) have their concerns, issues and values represented in a balanced manner (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Schwandt, 2001). In keeping with this idea, the narratives and the thematic analysis conducted in this study took all of the Elder-Counsellors' perspectives into account.

Generalization is not the goal of case studies; rather it is the uncovering of the uniqueness of each case that makes it valuable (Hays, 2004). This was another reason to highlight the Elder-Counsellors' wisdom through in-depth narratives. Having said that, it was also interesting to discover those aspects that are similar across cases (Hays, 2004). Merriam (2002) explained that what one learns from a particular context and case may be applicable in other situations just as we learn a skill and transfer that skill into other contexts. The readers of this study will decide to what extent and what parts of the information provided can be applied in their particular context. This concept has been called case-to-case generalizability (Merriam, 2002; Stake, 1995). Merriam (2002) stated that it is the rich, thick descriptions that provide generalizability in qualitative studies. Since the majority of Canadian counsellors are Euro-Canadians, it is hoped that the narratives and themes to be presented in the following chapters will be informative in their work with Indigenous clients.

In the next chapter, the reader will be introduced to each Elder-Counsellor as well as their insights and suggestions for assisting Euro-Canadian counsellors in working with Indigenous clients. The chapter that follows the narratives will examine the themes that arose from the Elder-Counsellors' narratives and will point out their suggestions, direct and indirect, on how counselling can be more culturally sensitive when Euro-Canadian counsellors are working with Indigenous clients. In the discussion chapter that follows, I will explain how the Elder-Counsellors' suggestions can be understood in light of what is known about cross-cultural counselling with Indigenous clients, and how this may inform or transform counselling with this client group in Canada.

CHAPTER IV

WISDOM OF THE ELDER-COUNSELLORS

The culture and history of Indigenous people was shared through the oral tradition of storytelling. Until recently, what little has been written in books about Indigenous culture and worldview has often been told from an ethnocentric viewpoint. Because of this, the words of Canada's First Peoples have been either unknown or, if known, undervalued by the dominant society. Out of respect for the struggles Indigenous peoples have had in being heard, the study participants will be represented here through approved narratives that include some of their personal history and that detail our conversations around the counselling process. This is in keeping with the belief that it is important to make the Elder-Counsellors known in a holistic manner that honors their life experience, knowledge and wisdom.

Spirit Eagle

> I live my life today bringing the integrity of our ancestors and living in the modern world with that integrity—and not only talking about it but actually living it. All of my mentors—and I've had mentors from nine tribes as well as mentors that I've met through my reading, like Gandhi and Thich Nhat Hanh, and it's what we role model that gives power to what we teach…
>
> Spirit Eagle, June, 2003

Spirit Eagle, a 67-year-old Mohawk Elder and Counsellor, was identified as a "healer" by the wise women of his tribe when he was three years old and then placed in the home of his grandmother. "In our tradition, you don't say 'When I grow up I'm going to be this or that.' The clan mothers see what your gifts are and they make sure you are apprenticed with an adult who has similar gifts," he said. Sadly, he was taken from his relatives at age eight and shuffled through a series of informal foster homes for two years before being sent to the West Coast to live with his father. This upheaval was the beginning of a number of years of loss, hardship and personal adversity—all factors that led Spirit Eagle to begin his own healing journey with a Cree Elder when he was in his twenties. For the past forty years he has fulfilled the role of healer, counsellor, teacher and mentor to those who seek his deep understanding and quiet wisdom. He continues to open his heart and his home to others by leading traditional Indigenous ceremonies and by supporting individuals and families in overcoming loss and addictions. He also introduces school groups to his sacred healing place and shares with them little known aspects of Indigenous history.

Spirit Eagle and I had a conversation in the cool of the Council House that he was directed to build on the land where he lives. "The Council House is a unique structure—it brings together the energies of the Long House of my people and Big House of the West Coast, the Hogan, the Wikiup, and the Tipi—various tribal dwellings into one structure," he explained. Those with a hunger to learn and understand are welcome and I felt very welcome. It was good to have my feet on the earth and be able to listen to the birds and other creatures sing and dance outside the doorway as Spirit Eagle shared with me stories of his life and his wisdom surrounding the art of counselling.

He told me his journey had taken him to many places and he had done many things, including holding jobs as a logger, short order cook, spending time in the military, being a sales representative, driving a cab and working in a hospital for those with mental health issues. "In 1959, while I was still in the military, I began a personal reading program of a minimum of one hour a day," he explained. Reading the philosophers, the physicists, psychologists and physicians broadened his understanding and outlook and gave him a deeper insight into the Western way of thinking. This prompted Spirit Eagle to go back to university in 1967 as a mature student. His studies included courses in history, geography, psychology, and sociology.

After completing his degree in history, his journey took him to a number of Aboriginal communities in Manitoba and British Columbia where he worked in various community service roles. In the late '70s, he ended up on Vancouver Island working as a drug and alcohol outpatient therapist and from that time on most of the positions he held involved counselling or the training of counsellors. He is one of the founders of the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors and is a registered clinical counsellor. "I've done a lot of training in terms of helping others to be able to carry out their tasks in ways which are respectful of the traditions and still be able to function in the modern world—because that's where we are," he said.

I asked Spirit Eagle how Euro-Canadian counsellors can create a healing environment for Indigenous clients that is respectful and supports their expectations about the healing process. Spirit Eagle shared that there are no absolutes and that it is important to be flexible. This flexibility needs to include places where counselling sessions are held, time allotted for a session and who attends the sessions:

> There are always going to be limitations because of the environment we're in, but ultimately I have to really let the work with the client shape how I work with that client...If I don't have a session with another client, then I'll often go over if it seems appropriate. I've had the good fortune of never having to be rigid about that (time).

In some cases, meeting in an office is the only practical solution for working with clients, explained Spirit Eagle, and if that is the case, the setting can be made more culture friendly by having relevant items on hand such as an eagle feather. "A counsellor might want to go to an Elder and ask it to be blessed or thank the Creator and thank the eagle clans for the gift," he said. He warned that there might be some wounded people "who are going to be offended because you've got an eagle feather" but if the counsellor knows they've received the gift "in a good medicine way…are we going to offend the gift? No, we treat the gift with the proper respect."

Spirit Eagle suggested that, if possible, taking clients out of the office can be very conducive to providing a healing environment: "Walk on a beach, walk along the river, walk in the forest. If you're in a city, go walk in a park…somewhere where you can touch the earth…. or explore with them whether they're open to going on a medicine journey". He explained that "a medicine journey is basically any journey into the forest or along the sea…spending time" where one can support and observe clients as they "observe the natural world around them and how they respond to it."

After speaking about creating a healing environment for clients, our discussion turned to the development of rapport between Euro-Canadian counsellors and Indigenous clients. Spirit Eagle noted that it's the counsellor's ability to build a strong relationship with clients that makes the difference in counselling: "It's been my observation that you can have the best program in the world and it will fail if you don't have the right people doing it. And you can have a dog of a program and if you've got the right people there, all kinds of wonderful, magical things will happen."

Spirit Eagle emphasized that one of the key aspects of developing an effective counselling relationship is treating clients with respect and dignity and as unique individuals:

> Have the skills to move out of a very narrow approach and open your heart and be in the world of the client. And if that means learning from the client what his or her world looks like, then learn what that world looks like. Techniques have their place but they need to flow from the life force.

Spirit Eagle cautioned against the use of a direct counselling approach, which may make clients feel powerless in their relationship with the counsellor: "In order for healing to take place, you have to empower people not come from a place of power over them" he said. "It's really important that clients are always in control of their own therapeutic journey."

Understanding the culture, history and worldview of Indigenous clients really helps in building a good relationship with them, explained Spirit Eagle. Vital to this knowledge is the fact "that non-Native people belong to a population of colonizers and we belong to a population of the colonized and Canada has not yet come up with a proper de-colonizing process—so in a very real sense there's a power imbalance." This does not mean that European-Canadians counsellors can't work effectively with Indigenous clients, he added, as long as "the therapist has appropriate skills and treats clients with dignity and worthiness".

Part of that understanding and respect, he added, is not making generalizations based on appearance and "apparent culture". "Saying that there is one approach for First Nations people, that's not respectful. We not only come from a wide range of tribes, we have had a wide range of different experiences with the larger society," he said. For example, he explained that some Indigenous clients may be largely assimilated into the dominant culture or they may be more bicultural or traditional. Alternatively, they may be in a transitional phase of acculturation. However, he believes that most, if not all, Indigenous people today are bicultural "because you're just exposed to so much mainstream society. So it's very difficult not to be bicultural at a certain level." Having said that, Spirit Eagle confirmed that "our people have always been able to survive by adapting to the environment we're in, whether it's a physical environment, an economic environment, a social environment…we still manage to keep the ground of our being". Spirit Eagle emphasized again that each client has his or her own story and own journey and is the expert of his/her own life. He commented that counsellors can only become connected to clients by opening their heart and soul to them.

I asked Spirit Eagle whether this "openness" includes Euro-Canadian counsellors being willing to participate in Indigenous cultural activities. "It doesn't hurt but it's not necessary," Spirit Eagle said. What is most important is for the counsellor to come from the "heart and soul place," and to be open to the spiritual aspect of life:

> If I don't have my own spiritual connection, whatever the shape of that may be, I'm going to be coming with human cleverness. I don't have the grounding. Wellness belongs to everybody. If we can keep that in mind, we can work with anyone. But we need to have done our own work too and continue to keep doing our own work.

He added that "healing requires all aspects of the healer to be brought to bear and if it's only intellectual, you're going to be pretty limited in how effective you're going to be". Spirit Eagle noted that the concept of the wounded healer is not new; to become a powerful Shaman, one needed "to go through some very powerful ordeals" in order to "learn about healing and to bring our gift forward."

The counsellor's approach and behaviour makes an important impression on the client from the first meeting or session. Meeting a new counsellor can be difficult for any client, remarked Spirit Eagle, and so first sessions are critical in terms of providing a safe, therapeutic place. "There's no general agenda," he said. It's the counsellor's ability to read or sense the client's level of discomfort and dispel it that will be key. "Is the therapist able to bring the creative energy to bare that can meet the needs of that client at that time and have the experience and skill to ensure it can lead to rapport?" Being in the heart place will allow the counsellor to be in the moment with that individual client and will result in an outflow of positive energy and hopefulness from counsellor to client, he explained. He added that counsellors need to allow the client space and time to tell his or her story and not to be afraid of silence: "Be comfortable with silences because sometimes people have trouble finding their voice. If the person gets really agitated and they're still not coming out, I will just very gently say breathe, breathe deeply and take them through a breathing exercise". Taking up a lot of time filling out forms in the first session "is not conducive to establishing rapport in my view," said Spirit Eagle. "I don't have a problem with confidentiality agreements, it's a matter of how you get them and when. Timing is the essence of much of life and if the timing is not appropriate, then you're not going to have a therapeutic relationship."

Once rapport has been established, in order to assist clients, it is important that counsellors are versed and knowledgeable in a variety of therapeutic approaches and interventions. However, the interventions utilized need to flow "naturally…instead of by intellectual cleverness", Spirit Eagle emphasized. Helpful interventions are those that emerge from "life process thinking," the understanding that all things are connected and not from "linear reductionist mechanistic thinking" he added. He went on to explain that linear reductionist mechanistic thinking is a way of thinking that involves relying on techniques and strategies, such as empirically supported treatments, which are touted to be effective:

> Linear reductionist mechanistic thinking doesn't serve life. It might be good for the person doing it but I question the benefit for the client. You can learn techniques but if you are not coming from the soul place, the heart place, it's an intellectual exercise in which you are trying to use human cleverness.

Spirit Eagle wonders if coming from a place of "human cleverness" is helpful. "Real healing takes place when we assist the individual to touch their own healing power from within them and blossom out of their own healing power," he said.

Having explained again that focusing on specific interventions is not beneficial, and that working with the individual is the key to positive outcomes, Spirit Eagle noted that there are general guidelines when clients come with particular presenting issues. For example, when working with clients who have additions problems, Spirit Eagle pointed out that he doesn't focus on "what the various chemicals do to their body…it's irrelevant". Instead he and his clients explore how the addictions are "getting in the way of life". He added:

> One of the things that is absolutely essential is to find ways to bring that denial down to a point where we can begin to do some serious work…and validate some of their strategies for living—it kept them alive…help them appreciate the skills that got them their chemicals so they can transform those skills into healing and wellness.

Spirit Eagle also suggested that being focused on wellness, rather than on the presenting issue, is more appropriate. "Picking scabs off wounds doesn't help—it tends to makes the wounds worse," he said. "My focus is helping the person find wellness factors that they can put into their life and to start feeling good about themselves. The Creator will not allow stuff to come up until the person is at the point where they can deal with a particular issue."

When dealing with clients who are angry, it is important to validate the anger, explained Spirit Eagle, but how it is done depends on the context of what the client is going through. With silent clients, he suggested sitting in silence with them. "I've sat in silence with someone for forty minutes and they finally can't handle the silence anymore so they break it," he said. "And it's not just a matter of staying with the silence, it's staying very calm, very present, and with a serene look on your face." With young clients, he watches their body language and if the discomfort level goes up too much, he breaks the silence by telling a story.

Besides responding to the specific issues clients are bringing in, Spirit Eagle noted that using humour has a very important place when working with Indigenous clients:

> I use humor with every client I work with, even around grief. But again, timing is the essence to this…it is not something I can delineate in an instructional way. It comes spontaneously within the context of what's going on between the client and I. To sit down and try to analyze it would be to lose the sense of it. This is human to human.

I agreed that it would be very difficult to teach the appropriate use of humor but that well-timed humour lightens the heart and makes the work go more smoothly for both client and counsellor.

Using teaching stories can also be an effective way of working with Indigenous clients, Spirit Eagle shared. Stories are so powerful because they are an ancient part of the human experience and a large part of traditional Aboriginal education. "The thing about story is it's not a direct threat. I believe there is something in our genetic make-up that responds to generational story telling." According to Spirit Eagle, the stories don't need to be Indigenous stories and can come from any source but they do need to be easily understood and resonate with the client.

Spirit Eagle emphasized that the timing, as well the specifics of the intervention, must fit the individual client. "There is, in my view, no one approach. It has to again, resonate with the individual." For Spirit Eagle, this also goes for ending sessions and ending counselling. "I allow the process of the session to dictate how it should end," he said. He noted that a sensitive counsellor, who is open to the client, will know when and how to end sessions and end counselling.

Spirit Eagle would like to see more universities help prepare counselling students for working with Indigenous clients. He suggested that including courses on colonization and Indigenous culture in counselling programs would be beneficial. In addition, it is important for Euro-Canadian counsellors to develop an understanding of "life process thinking" and how Indigenous people see and understand the world. But even more essential for counsellors "is doing your own spiritual work and getting to know some of the different cultures by actually participating in some of the ceremonies".

Much of what Spirit Eagle shared with me that afternoon was in the form of stories. The stories were so compelling that I could have sat there for many more hours. But the wind gently blew back the door covering of the Council House and I knew it was time to thank Spirit Eagle and leave.

Bessie

> I think it helps having lived through what my clients are now living through, the kinds of problems they have. I've been there, done that. And sometimes people slip—I've done that too. The most important thing is to be patient…
>
> Bessie, September 2003

Having survived the wrenching experience of being forcibly separated from her family and culture gives Bessie a deep insight into the life experience of many who come to her for help. This 48-year-old Inuk grandmother spent seven years, from the age of 7, attending residential school in a community far from the traditional land of her ancestors. She explained that there was physical and sexual abuse at the school and even the comfort of being able to speak her language with other Inuit children was forbidden to her. "Every time we tried to speak our language we'd get hit in the back of the head," she explained. As an adult, she had to work hard to relearn the language that she lost. "Even when I started speaking my language as an adult I'd look around to see if anybody was going to hit me." Adding to her pain was the fact that she didn't even know if her parents were alive during the years she was at school. They were nomadic hunters who travelled much of the year and there was no way to contact them. By the time she was finally reunited with her family at age 14, she felt like a stranger. "I didn't know who they were or how they looked," she said.

Bessie now lives in a community of about 1500 people on a large island in Canada's newest territory, Nunavut. The community is quite multicultural, she explained, and includes Inuit from across the north, some Aboriginal people and a number of non-

Inuit. She has been there since 1978 and likes it there because "all the people work together." Bessie's work experience has included positions working for the Hamlet, as a counsellor at the community wellness centre, as a family violence coordinator, and as a student support assistant working with two blind children. She completed a three-year alcohol and drug counsellor training program and also has training in sign language and Braille. For the past three years she has worked as the community's drug and alcohol counsellor. "It's not only Inuit that I counsel. It's everybody who's here," she said.

She explained that she is happy to have reached the age of 48 and attributes some of her success to the support of her husband of 25 years. She has five children, two of whom are adopted, and 10 grandchildren. Being part of a large extended family living in a small community means that there isn't a day that goes by without one or more relatives or friends dropping in for a visit or to share a meal. In addition, Bessie and her husband often extend their hospitality to strangers. I was honoured by the opportunity to meet Bessie and her family and spend some time in a northern Inuit community. My visit provided me with valuable insight into modern Inuit community and family life. I found Bessie's kindness, understanding and acceptance of me, a stranger from a different culture, with a different lifestyle, and with a very different background, deeply touching. I was valued and appreciated, not so much in words but in every action and in the kindness and respect shown to me. Bessie and her husband spent hours showing me the land and taking me to places where I would see musk ox and arctic hare. We shared meals, laughed at the antics of the grandchildren and traded stories of our various life experiences.

The formal part of my interview with Bessie took place in her office, a five-minute walk from her home. Outside, a strong wind tossed about the fall's first snowflakes while we sat, warm and comfortable, conversing about the counselling process. Bessie has the innate ability to make those in her presence feel cared about and valued without saying a word. She is calm, warm and non-judgmental yet knowledgeable and understanding. When I asked her what is most important to remember about counselling, she said to "have patience and to believe that people can and do change". In order to be able to do this, counsellors must know themselves and have worked on their own issues, she explained.

We discussed what might be a helpful counselling environment when working with Inuit clients. Although Bessie pointed out that she often sees clients in her office, she always asks them if they feel comfortable meeting there. If they don't, she meets with them at a place where they feel more at home. "It's really up to the clients," she said, with the knowledge that this is quite practical in a small community where people live minutes from each other. "You might ask if they want to meet somewhere else. I'd do that".

She explained that more important than having certain items in an office is the counsellor's attitude, warmth and willingness to listen. She feels that having overcome difficult life experiences also contributes to a counsellor's understanding. If possible, it is worthwhile for the counsellor "to be more flexible about the session time especially for the people who are suicidal or just coming out from an abusive home." She suggested that when someone is in crisis, it is helpful if the counsellor can make himself or herself more available until the client feels less vulnerable. Bessie added that it is important to work with new clients on an individual basis until they have made some progress "even if they say they need family counselling." Otherwise, if the whole family comes, some members may defer to the father or mother and some truths may not come out. She said she has seen looks pass between family members that imply "you shouldn't say this, this and that."

When it comes to the relationship between the counsellor and client, the counsellor should not give the impression that he/she is the expert, noted Bessie. Rather, the counsellor's primary role is to listen, to be supportive, and to help clients understand that they have choices. Although the counsellor may suggest options and both may discuss the pros and cons of those choices, clients must make the final decisions, Bessie explained. Sometimes she shares some of her personal experiences to help clients see that she too has faced difficult moments and has been able to overcome them. "For me, it's experience. I tell my clients that I went through this or that."

When Euro-Canadian counsellors work with Inuit clients they need to be aware of the different way of speaking. "Give them time to speak, don't rush them to speak, and if they don't answer right away, don't ask for it," she said. "When they pause for a long time, they're thinking." She explained that sometimes clients may be recalling an incident or situation in their minds and that it takes time to find the words to explain it to someone else. This is especially true for individuals for whom English is their second language.

We then discussed culture and whether the counsellor or client should bring it up during a counselling session. Bessie recommended that it is best for the client to do so although a counsellor may want to find out how much the client is involved in traditional culture if it doesn't arise naturally in the course of the client's story. In a small community, where there aren't many jobs, boredom can be a problem among the younger people. "I'll suggest that they do something for the Elders like maybe hunting caribou, do some fishing, get water…just do anything for them." In the Inuit way, helping the Elders is an important cultural belief. However, she explained, it wouldn't be appropriate for her to suggest to a counsellor from another culture that they participate in Inuit cultural activities. "It's up to the counsellors if they want to try different things or if they just want to stay in one spot," she said. She added that she was very pleased that I had felt it important enough to come up to see what life is like in the small northern community where she lives.

First sessions are vital if the counsellor wants to connect with the client, Bessie remarked. When first meeting a new client, it is important to "shake hands, introduce themselves and make eye contact" to help the client feel welcome and safe. Again, she emphasized the importance of giving the clients time to tell their story, "not to rush them for words right away." She noted the she has not experienced difficulty around having clients fill out forms and discussing confidentiality during the first session and doesn't think this is a big issue.

When it comes to interventions for specific presenting issues, Bessie explained that she often uses a variety of educational resources in addition to working with clients to find the root of their difficulties. These materials may be on understanding the cycle of violence, on anger management and information on helping to boost self-esteem. She added that in many Inuit communities there has been a great deal of secrecy around childhood sexual and physical abuse and so she and her clients go back in time to when the drinking and drug use started to try to find out what was happening for the person at that time. She helps clients see that the drug and alcohol use is often a coping mechanism. In situations of family violence, Bessie ensures that the victims are safe and helps connect them with the family violence counsellor. Then she works with the abuser. She explained that often abusers don't realize that they have patterned their way of being in relationships from what they saw and experienced in childhood. She suggested that working with Inuit clients to help them understand these family behavior patterns could help them change and develop healthier relationships.

With clients who are angry, she feels it is important to let them express their anger. "And after they calm down, I'd ask them what's going on.'" If they make angry remarks about the counsellor's race or culture, it helps not to take this personally as it is probably about something else, she added. With silent clients, "just be there and be silent with them," she suggested. Sometimes, if the counsellor believes the client is having a difficult time opening up, it may be appropriate to share some personal information. "If they don't want to talk, I'd just begin and keep telling them 'I'm here when you're ready to talk,'" Bessie said. When appropriate, she uses humour with her clients. "We look at situations that happened and try to find the funny side of it," she said. Although she doesn't use formal story telling as a counselling technique, she often uses examples to illustrate a point. To elaborate, she told me about her work with a client who is a carver. She explained that they worked on helping him think about carving in a new way--not to make money to support his habit but as a way to express what is in his heart. She added that it allowed him to look at a piece of stone and "see", in an intuitive sense, what the stone is meant to become. This is the difference between a carver and an artist, she explained.

Bessie noted that, if possible, she leaves it up to the client to end the session. "Usually, the clients tell me that's all they have to say and then we leave it at that until the next appointment. The client knows when it's time to stop," she said.

Since Bessie did not attend university for her counselling training she felt she could not comment on how counsellor training could be improved to help counsellors work in cross-cultural situations. She did suggest that if counsellors want to work with Inuit clients, spending time in a northern community would give the counsellor a better understanding of Inuit culture and lifestyle and how traumatic it could be moving from a small community to a large city.

This seemed a good place to end the interview particularly as we weren't sure whether Bessie had drop-in clients waiting to see her. It would have been strange to leave and not to give her a hug, so I asked if that would be okay. She said yes, that was fine since we were like sisters now. I could feel her warmth and acceptance, which went far beyond words, and it did seem like we had known each other for a long, long time. As I stepped outside I noticed that it was warmer now and had stopped snowing.

White Thunderbird Woman

> Spirit and religion are two different things. Spirit is usually in religion, but spirit is who we are—the love and light—who we are, the pain we have, how we see the world, everything. We have to heal through all of that before we're strong enough and healthy enough to help other people connect to spirit. We're the first people it begins with because we can't even begin to work with clients until we've worked with ourselves first.
>
> White Thunderbird Woman, September, 2003

White Thunderbird Woman's path to find and honor all parts of herself has led her to connect not only with traditional Aboriginal healing methods but also to complete Western training in social work and counselling. The 51-year-old traditional healer and counsellor refers to herself as a Cree woman with Métis status "because the Cree woman in me was the strongest."

We met in an office at a large University counselling centre in Western Canada and, after introductions, began with prayer and with the smudging of sage, a common method of cleansing in many Aboriginal traditions. This ceremony brought us into a calmness and harmony and set the mood for our conversation. I felt very connected to White Thunderbird Woman and was soothed by her melodic voice and welcoming manner.

She explained that during her early years in Saskatchewan, she spent time with her paternal grandmother, who was Cree. Although she didn't have the benefit of learning to speak the language as a child, she became closely connected to her Cree heritage and to nature. "Every time I went to the farm, Grandma and I used to go off and walk and she'd show me herbs…and she would tell me stories about my people and my ways and the spirit." Her grandmother shared with her stories of surviving residential school and how she had to give up much of her language and culture to keep peace with her non-Aboriginal husband. Of her grandmother's seven children only White Thunderbird Woman's father was connected to his Aboriginal roots. "So I was raised in two worlds, very bicultural," she said.

White Thunderbird Woman explained that even as a child she had been endowed with the intuitive gift of understanding the natural and supernatural world and that this had set her apart from others in school. She explained:

> I didn't have a lot of friends because they would call me witch…crazy Indian girl, all those things. So sometime over the next few years, I decided I didn't want to be Indian. So I gave up. I tried to block out the voices and disconnected from my spiritual roots and I lived my life as a very Westernized woman.

As a young woman, she married a European-Canadian man, had children and lived a very Eurocentric existence. Then about 20 years ago, her oldest son started to experience what she had experienced as a child "and it began to trigger my memories… and I knew I had to find my way back to my roots to who I really was." She was led to a Blackfoot Elder who became her spiritual grandmother and who taught her many things, some that were similar to the teachings of her childhood, others that were different. "There are many different ways of doing things, but it's all for the same reason and that's all about love and connection."

From then on she has had many teachers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. "We have to remember that in order to move forward and find out who we are, we must constantly keep moving and experiencing and learning new things because all people have knowledge, not just our Elders." She found herself back in the Western education system and is now completing a Master of Social Work degree. "I'm at university to build that bridge between the Western ways of knowing and traditional ways of knowing, I know that. And in order to be valued not just as a traditional healer, I have to have my Master's degree so that what I say won't be questioned."

When White Thunderbird Woman sees clients, she does not counsel in the usual Western way. "I work with spirit energy and vibration and that's my gift," she said. For example, she uses drumming, singing and humming to increase the "vibrational energy" of her clients. "I start to drum and sing and hum and get them to hum and sing. Drumming vibrates the beta waves in the brain, which is a place of joy and euphoria." She also uses a form of Reiki and acupressure, which was taught to her by the Elders, to help clients connect to the emotions trapped in the body. Sometimes she uses traditional medicines to help clients relax and overcome anxiety. "I work with people who are severely traumatized and so I find that conventional therapy, using cognitive and behavioural models, doesn't work. You have to be able to help people connect to spirit right away," she explained.

I wondered what White Thunderbird Woman would propose in terms of helpful counselling environments when Euro-Canadian counsellors are working with Indigenous clients. She explained that while being in nature and connected to earth is very beneficial, sometimes an office is the only practical place to meet. She suggested that it is helpful to "work in a more unstructured environment" as counsellors need to "create a place of love and equality, not inequality. Working together in an office where there may be a table between you creates barriers and you will never reach Aboriginal clients that way. That's why they do not come back." She suggested that soft chairs, blankets, candles, and a smudge can help create an environment that is warm and inviting.

Although White Thunderbird Woman acknowledges that it is often necessary to schedule clients every hour, this is in no way ideal. She would prefer to book two clients a day but said that even more important than time is working with a client until they have experienced a change in their body energy level. "Our primary responsibility as helpers is to change the energy level of our clients. The greatest way to do that is to love them, to support them…help them see what their strengths are." For some clients this takes up to four hours. "So the difference between the Western concept and the traditional way is you start when it begins and you end when it's over—and you'll know." Although this is not how European-Canadian counsellors tend to conduct counselling sessions, her clients have been able to make changes in their lives in just one session, she explained.

She also noted that it is important to start working with a client on an individual basis but that, as soon as possible, to include more family members in sessions. "If there's something going on in that individual, they're affecting everyone in their family. So it's important that the entire family, the entire community heal, she said. She begins with individuals "trying to get them to a point where they can at least cope" and "where they're empowered enough to make decisions," and then she moves on to work with the entire family. She said she has found that "families are very willing to help" because "they know that they need healing too". Her family and community work is always done in a healing circle, she added.

Developing rapport with Indigenous clients, especially as a Euro-Canadian counsellor, entails creating a place of equality, White Thunderbird Woman shared. "Trust and compassion are not enough. When you have someone sitting in front of you, you must open your heart to them, break down all barriers so that they know you are one with them," she added. She cautions against maintaining a professional aloofness. "We're taught to be respectful and compassionate and have genuineness but we're always taught to remain professional. If you remain disconnected from your client, on any level, you will never reach them," she went on. She stated that she is not directive even if that is what the client asks for. "By being directive, you are doing the client a great disservice because it perpetuates the whole fostering dependency on someone else," she said.

According to White Thunderbird Woman, every counsellor should understand the historical context of Aboriginal people as a colonized group as well as understand Aboriginal spirituality and worldview. "What's behind a sweat lodge for example? Not just going to a sweat lodge but finding out the teachings behind it. Why do we pray with tobacco? What is behind it? So you really start to connect yourself on a very deep level," she explained. However, counsellors can't really do this until they come to understand who they are, culturally and spiritually. "If my clients are Aboriginal people, I need to know how to connect them spiritually. How do you do that? You have to know who you are spiritually," she added. "I know many non-Aboriginal people who work in a very holistic way, they work with energy, they understand energy and spirit, they know how to help heal the pain behind the anger."

White Thunderbird Woman stressed the importance of ceremony and ritual when working with clients. "Ceremony is about bringing us back into ourselves, into our spirit where all the answers are. It's doesn't matter where you come from or who you are—whether you are Chinese or Western or Aboriginal or African, what is it that we do for hope? It's ritual." She pointed out that starting each session with ritual or ceremony lets clients know that they can speak freely about their spirituality and culture in sessions. It also provides the counsellor with opportunities to find out if clients want to be connected to resources such as Elders, sweat lodge ceremonies or other holistic practices.

First sessions are critical in terms of making a connection, explained White Thunderbird Woman. She pointed out that since Aboriginal people are a colonized people they have been required to fill out many, many forms over the years. They may do as counsellors ask but it may interfere with the development of a trusting relationship. "It's very impersonal when someone comes into an office first of all and they say who they are and then the counsellor says 'fill in this form.' Filling in forms is a very oppressive task to give many Aboriginal people. You must create a place of belonging or they will never come back," she said. She also suggested that counsellors "soften and lower their voices", which is more respectful and welcoming.

Our conversation turned to helpful interventions for specific difficulties. White Thunderbird Woman suggested that to make counselling helpful to Aboriginal clients it is important to find the root causes of the presenting issues. "The addiction is not the real problem," she said. "You have to be able to find out what's behind the addiction and work on a very deep, deep therapeutic level helping clients deal with the pain, not the addiction." This is also true of family violence, she added, although the most important first step is to ensure the safety of the victims. "Remember that family violence is only the presenting problem. There's pain. Anger management does not help individuals face their pain, it only helps them deal with controlling their anger and eventually they are going to erupt." In situations where depression is the presenting issue, it is important to understand the suicide risk first. "Make sure they are safe first of all and then you have to change the energy level. Help them connect to who they are, help them find out what they want to do, help them face where the depression is coming from," she said.

White Thunderbird Woman described that many Aboriginal people have been in a depressive state for many, many years and that depression has been passed from generation to generation because of colonization practices and oppression. She suggested helping "clients create a new pattern" so they can "reframe who they are". She believes that:

> There's no such thing as mental illness, there's spiritual imbalance. We are looking outside of ourselves for the answers so we've come out of our body, we've disconnected from spirit. All we have to do as practitioners is to get those people into their bodies. They'll find the answers.

Euro-Canadian counsellors may face clients who are angry or silent, especially when they are mandated to see a counsellor. Again, White Thunderbird Woman suggested speaking in a low tone and helping clients to breathe. "People who are very silent and very angry hold their breath a lot." She also suggested asking clients what you can do for them. "You keep asking questions until they start saying something and you try and help them through that and you value everything they say," she said. With respect to anger, she stated that she values the client's anger and responds to it by gently raising her hand to the deflect the anger and re-direct it back to the client. "I literally use my hand—because the anger is coming at me and I put it back at them in a gentle way. I constantly bring them back into their anger." She believes that it is important to help clients see it is their anger and that it has provided them with a means of coping with pain but that to move on they need to stop blaming others and accept this anger and the pain behind it. She reiterated that when working with Aboriginal clients it is so important to help bring them back into their bodies to help them to connect their spirit and emotions to their bodies because they have learned to disconnect from what they feel as a way of coping.

Another important way to help clients change their energy level or reconnect to their feelings is to use laughter. "Sometimes drumming doesn't help, sometimes breathing doesn't help, sometimes valuing them doesn't help, sometimes loving them doesn't help. But sometimes laughter is all they need," White Thunderbird Woman said.

She also uses stories because "stories create a place of belonging" and clients become part of the story and take what they need from it. Stories are valuable in that they are indirect and very visual. "From the beginning of time we've told stories and that's how we taught our children the values, the morals, and how to deal with things."

According to White Thunderbird Woman, an important part of the healing process is having the flexibility to end counselling sessions at the right time, when the client's energy level has changed. "You know it's time for the session to wind down when the client is sitting a different way, reacting in a positive way, smiling, laughing, their energy level has changed. You begin to see hope, you begin to see empowerment," she said. "Then you can say 'I'm so happy you came today, will you come again?'"

As our conversation was coming to an end, I reflected on what she had said and realized that I would enjoy meeting with White Thunderbird Woman again. I had learned so much from our conversation but felt that I wanted more, much more. I wondered if her clients felt the same way when their sessions ended.

Sandra

> I think the bottom line is to respect the client before you—who they are, what they are, where they come from, and whether they're down and out and smell, whether they are the worst criminal you can think of, or whether they're a socialite…treat them with respect and dignity and care because they deserve that.
>
> Sandra, October, 2003

Sandra is no stranger to difficult times. The 56-year-old Métis counsellor and registered Child Play Therapist finished an undergraduate degree in social work with five of her nine children still living at home and while dealing with painful personal issues. During that time she said that "one of my kids had a psychotic breakdown, that was my first year. The second year one of my older sons committed suicide, and my third year my father died. It was a pretty traumatic time." But she made it through all that and towards the end was thinking "I wonder if I can make it through graduate school". So Sandra continued on to graduate school and in 1992, she completed her M.S.W. in Community Development.

She spoke of her experiences as being part of the journey of her life, one that she couldn't have negotiated without her Christian faith and without the support and help of her husband. She explained that her husband has not only been her partner and friend for 38 years, but took over household chores and child-minding so that she could complete her education. "He was 100 per cent behind me. Washing clothes and making meals and intervening with the kids", she said.

The afternoon I met Sandra, she ushered me into an office that was sunny and inviting. Beams of light shone through an exquisite hand-crafted glass hanging of the Madonna and Child and then danced around the furry hand puppets, Aboriginal dolls, and play therapy objects displayed on various shelves. I felt immediately at home.

She told me that her early years had prepared her well for the work she does today. Her mother was White and her father Aboriginal, she explained. "My mother's side of the family was not very accepting of me and my brother but my father's side was very accepting. So I began to feel very connected to my Aboriginal side."

At age 11, she was placed in a foster home with a Norwegian family because her mother had to find work and her job took her out into bush camps, where Sandra could not go. The foster home was a positive experience for Sandra.

> They made a real difference in my life because of the way the father treated his wife and children…that changed my life and possibly changed the direction of my life so

that I did not get into an abusive relationship…I was determined that there wouldn't be any drinking or anything like that in my family.

At 13, she ended up in another home where she worked for her room and board while going to school. Two years later, she moved in with her maternal grandmother "who did not like to acknowledge the Aboriginal side of me at all," she said. Sandra talked about how her religious beliefs helped her to seek out validation of her Aboriginal heritage:

> My belief system is Christian and that became a real source of strength for me and a guide for directions that I wanted to take. I started praying about a husband. I knew he would have to be Aboriginal because I never wanted to marry White and have happen to my children what happened to me.

She met her husband, a Cree man from northern Ontario, while he was attending Bible school in Alberta. They married when she was 18 and immediately started a family. Both agreed that they wanted a large family and that they would adopt. "Somebody had taken me in and had made a tremendous difference in my life and I just felt that was something I needed to pass on," Sandra explained. "Over the years we adopted three kids and had six of our own."

She started upgrading her education when the youngest child was two and it took a number of years with some stops and starts before finally completing the Master's degree. Since that time she worked in a number of smaller communities before moving with her husband and family to a large community in Western Canada. She recently completed the training required to become a registered play therapist. She now works with high needs children and families in the areas of trauma and reactive attachment disorder.

I was interested in finding out what kind of counselling environments would be supportive of healing when working with Indigenous clients and Sandra explained that being in an office is not usually a problem. She noted that it's not what's in the office that is important; but the demeanour and honesty of the counsellor that helps the client feel at home. If a client feels "welcomed and warm and accepted" and that the counsellor is "listening…and they care to hear what you have to say, it doesn't matter what's on the wall," she said. Counsellors "can have the fanciest room with all the latest gadgets" but if they "can't make that connection, what is it worth?"

She suggested that there might be times when certain clients feel very uncomfortable in an office and at those times she may take them out for coffee or a walk. "Sometimes we have gone out for walks and we've walked around and around," she said. Driving around in a car may also help some clients open up because they feel more comfortable when they are not in a face-to-face situation with the counsellor, she explained. Sandra added that she would extend counselling beyond the regular session time if she felt it would be helpful to a particular client, although her time is in high demand and such opportunities are rare. Sometimes the counselling hour time frame can even be helpful, especially when working through trauma. "You don't want to have it coming out all at once, it's pretty overwhelming," she said. "So setting up the guidelines ahead of time and letting them know this is the way it is, I find I don't have a problem with that."

Sandra shared that although she starts working with an individual client, it is sometimes important to move up to working with more family members and even community members. However, if a client "is in a really unsafe environment, you're not going to pull people in, even if they are close family. I do like to work with the individuals but I also like to include and work with family if that is possible," she said.

When working with Aboriginal clients, it is vital not to be directive but to discuss a number of options, Sandra explained:

> It is important not to sit there with superior knowledge but to sit there with an attitude that you have something to offer me and I have something to offer you. One of the major ways of speaking and being is not 'I'm here to advise you. I know and can solve your problems for you'. Native people don't want you to solve their problems for them.

She noted that she asks clients what they see as their options, then will expand, if possible, on those options and finds out what they would find most helpful. It is important to continue being accepting and respectful even if they decide not to follow any of those options, she added.

Sandra emphasized that if European-Canadian counsellors work with Indigenous clients, they need to develop an understanding of the history of colonization in this country:

> The history that Canadians get is that all these great White explorers discovered this land. Well, if those great White explorers didn't have great Native guides and great Native women who provided for them, they would never have survived. I

> think it's important to have that history and to have an understanding of why Aboriginal people are where they're at today.

She added that many people don't understand that, even today, discrimination continues to be a big problem. "There are so many people who feel that they are not prejudiced and that they are not condescending or not feeling superior but in fact their attitude towards how Aboriginal people do things, such as child rearing, shows that they are—whether they know it or not." She explained that it is the unspoken belief of some European-Canadian counsellors that Aboriginal clients "are just not doing it right" that can interfere with development of helpful counselling relationships.

Sandra pointed out that understanding that Indigenous people have a different worldview is a good first step to developing rapport but counsellors also need to remember:

> There are a lot of different Aboriginal Nations and although there are things they have in common, there are many things that are unique in different communities. I would invite people to share with me what they believe and who they are and their culture. It enriches both of you and it makes a connection.

Spirituality is a key component of Indigenous worldview, explained Sandra, and counsellors need to be open to addressing this issue if they want to understand all aspects of clients' lives. "Spirituality is a very, very important part of Aboriginal life. Often with Aboriginal people, they have a combination of Native spirituality and either Catholicism, Anglican faith or some have a more fundamentalist approach. So that's something you need to look at." She elaborated that if European-Canadian counsellors participate and enjoy Aboriginal celebrations and ceremonies it gives the message that "I respect and enjoy sharing in this significant part of your life."

Sandra expressed that the way the first meeting between the counsellor and client goes sets the stage for the counselling relationship and how counselling interventions are received. She emphasized the need for counsellors to be "respectful and caring" not "superior" and to listen well if the counsellor hopes to make a connection with a client. "The importance is on the relationship more than who you are...you have to have empathy, not superiority. I'll just sit and listen and let them talk at the beginning. 'Why are you here? How can I help you? What can I do for you? What can we do together?'" she said. Once the counsellor has made a connection, then the necessary forms surrounding confidentiality and informed consent for services can be completed. "You don't have to be rigid in how you do stuff. You can feel out the situation and work with the client. And some of that information you can get in the next session or two."

According to Sandra, helpful interventions in counselling Aboriginal people include the use of storytelling and appropriate humour. "Stories are so effective because they are a form of nurturing. They pass on overt and subliminal messages and they entertain." Although she expressed that stories from any culture are useful as they help clients see that others may face similar dilemmas and stressors, Indigenous stories are particularly powerful. "They give the message that our people are powerful enough to write about and their stories are important enough to share," she said.

Aboriginal humour is "fun humour, it's often self-deprecating…directed at themselves" explained Sandra. However, before European-Canadian counsellors use humour they need to have a good relationship with the client and have taken time to notice how the particular client is using humour. Then, in a tentative manner, they can pattern their humour accordingly. "Counsellors need to be very careful because if they use some of the Native humour, it could come across as racist. She cautioned that "The humour should not poke fun at Aboriginal groups as this could easily cause offence".

Our conversation moved to discussing helpful interventions for specific presenting problems. Sandra suggested that when working with those with addictions, it is helpful for clients to understand that although the addiction is now the problem, in the beginning the taking of drugs or drinking was a solution or a way of coping with emotional and perhaps physical pain. "I invite them to look at this dysfunctional way of coping, why they are using, what are other ways of coping and what healthier ways of coping we can consider," she said. In the area of family violence, Sandra explained that safety is the first consideration and then she provides education around the common myths people believe about violence and teaches about the cycle of violence.

With angry clients, Sandra said "I try to stay very calm and when they're getting angry, I'll often speak lower and I'll speak slower and I'll be very, very calm," while still acknowledging the anger and allowing clients to express their anger. When working with clients who find it difficult to verbalize their distress, Sandra provides many alternatives: "If you can't talk about it—can you write about it? Can you draw pictures? Can you read what you have written, do you want me to read what you have written or do you want me to read it and reply to it?"

Regardless of the nature of the presenting issue, she explained that it is crucial for the counsellor to understand the context of what is going on in the client's life. She noted that in some cases, clients may believe that "Indian medicine" is being used against them. "Then I would invite them to tell me what would be the most, from their understanding,…the most important step that they need to take to counteract or reverse this." Although she doesn't refer clients to sweat lodges or other sacred ceremonies: "I would invite them to tell me who might be a healthy person…and who they can really respect…who they should be going to see." Her underlying consideration when using any interventions is "what is the comfort level of this person and is it going to be a healing process for them." To Sandra, the clients are the experts. "They'll guide you. You may help facilitate change but it's up to them to do it."

Besides identifying the most appropriate ways to help facilitate the healing process for clients, counsellors need to choose how to sensitively bring closure to the counselling relationship. From Sandra's perspective, ending counselling needs to be approached on an individual basis. "I think that for different people, it's different. I often will take my clients out and maybe go to a special place for coffee, or take them out for a meal." Sandra added that sometimes she has given small gifts or cards in which she had written special messages. "For me I may do it differently every time. It's going to depend on the person."

University programs can help European-Canadian counsellors to become more competent when working with Indigenous clients by encouraging them to take unbiased history courses and Native Studies courses that deal with worldview and living situations, explained Sandra. "It's important to have an understanding of why Aboriginal people keep going back to communities even though there is no work and to understand the discrimination that they face when they move into a larger community to find work," she added.

After ending the formal part of the interview Sandra showed me some of the cultural items in her office and some of the materials she uses in her work with children. All afternoon I had enjoyed her warmth and openness, and now I was moved by the enthusiasm she had for her work. I left the office, feeling new motivation to continue my work with children.

Peggy

> If there is a key to working in a cross-cultural situation, it is coming to terms with White privilege and what that means. It's so hard for some people to understand that if their skin is White they've got privilege—without them doing anything, they've got it. And White privilege has just an overwhelming impact in counselling.
>
> Peggy, October, 2003

Peggy, a psychologist from Manitoba, has spent 45 years teaching and counselling others. But the 62-year-old professor is hesitant and uncomfortable about being called an Elder, even though she was referred to me because others felt she embodied the wisdom, understanding and caring associated with being an Elder. "It's a totally misused word that has been made into an institution," she said. She explained that she has seen some people use the term to make themselves "grandiose" but that's not what being an Elder is all about.

Peggy, who is Cree, grew up on a farm with her parents and four siblings in a warm, nurturing environment. She said that often people assume that all Aboriginal families are unhealthy and this just isn't true. "Ours is a very close knit family," she explained. Her growing up years were spent in a rural and small town environment and "it wasn't until I went to University that I became a part of a city," she said. Those urban and university experiences expanded Peggy's view of the world and developed her understanding of other cultures, other environments, and herself. "It would be almost impossible to live in this society and not be at least bicultural," she said. "But that doesn't mean we don't carry our cultural roots with us wherever we go." Completing a PhD opened many doors for Peggy and allowed her to travel widely. It was "an eye opener to travel…to realize the amount of wealth there is in the world and how it's so poorly distributed," she said.

Peggy's graduate training in counselling helped her realize that a client-centred perspective fit her personality the best. "I have a basic belief that everybody has to find his or her own style of counselling," she explained. "I had to find myself and know where I was situated before I could work with anybody else."

Our conversation about counselling Indigenous clients took place in Peggy's office, between meetings with students and packing up to move, yet I felt no sense of being rushed. Although I felt nervous initially, Peggy's relaxed manner and earnest dialogue put me quickly at ease. I posed a question about whether an office would provide an environment conducive to healing. According to Peggy, "you can counsel a person anywhere, so long as you're both feeling safe and comfortable in the situation. It depends on who you're working with, where you are, what you're comfortable with and what your gut tells you," she said. "You just seize the counselling moment, same as the teaching moment." If you end up counselling in an office, she suggested no desks between client and counsellor, plants, natural light and no clutter. "If you work in cluttered surroundings, it kind of says what your counselling is like—it's kind of cluttered and all over the place."

Peggy also explained that regardless of the counselling environment, the amount of time a counsellor spends with each client will depend on the client's needs and on the counsellor's schedule:

> If ten people are wanting to see you in a day, then you're going to have to limit yourself. If you are in a situation where you see somebody once in a while, then you sit down and have tea with them and you finish when it feels appropriate to finish—maybe ten minutes or it may take three or four hours.

She shared that flexibility is as important as understanding what the individual client needs. For example, with some children and teens, the arrangement of seeing a counsellor at a regular time and place may provide a sense of security "because a lot of the kids I see, for instance, have no structure in their lives and they really need to feel safe".

Peggy explained that although she usually begins working with a client on an individual basis, it might be beneficial, at some point, to involve friends and/or family members in the sessions:

> You can't completely counsel anybody outside the system that they work in because they come from a complex set of relationships...particularly in Indigenous counselling, you need to look at those relationships...until people can find harmony with the people and the environment they're in, then they're never going to feel stabilized.

But again, she cautioned, "So much of this depends on the individual and the individual situation...you need to know the network around the particular client".

When it comes to developing rapport with Indigenous clients, Peggy suggested that Euro-Canadian counsellors be honest with themselves and then with their clients. This means counsellors need to have a good understanding of who they are as people and the cultural influences that have shaped their lives. "I did a lot of work on myself before I started working with other people—that's been vital to my counselling career," she said.

Peggy suggested that relationship building involves using all the senses. "I don't see anything wrong with crying with a client. I certainly don't think there is anything wrong with laughing with a client," she said. She shared that she believes that valuing the importance of silence is also critical when working with Indigenous clients, as silence can be a way of showing respect or working through a problem. In addition, the pace of speaking is often slower, the volume lower and listening is deeper, she explained.

> We have to know what patterns of discourse are like...Especially with the older generation, there's definitely a pause after speaking, that's to show respect as much as anything and to think about what they said. Within most European

> societies, it's almost disrespectful not to talk right away. It looks as though you're not interested.

She also gave the example of Indigenous children in schools. "I hear a lot of teachers saying that Aboriginal children don't speak up in class, but for the most part they aren't given a chance," she said.

From Peggy's perspective, being able to develop rapport and build a relationship is only possible if Euro-Canadian counsellors understand that a particular cultural background imparts a certain worldview and way of being in the world. Peggy explained that counselling can never be a culture-free endeavour:

> That comes from that White privilege idea or that cultural imperialism thinking that because I am who I am, I'm kind of invisible, and I don't even need to know anything about other cultures. To think that something is culture free is a thought that would come from somebody who thinks that they don't need to know the culture.

She believes that Euro-Canadian psychologists and counsellors need to look at what has shaped their opportunities, specifically at issues that have to do with their own privilege, if they want to understand how they may be viewed by their clients.

According to Peggy, this necessitates having an understanding of colonization in Canada and how it has shaped the history and lives of Indigenous people. "It wouldn't hurt when you're working with Aboriginal clients to say that 'I realize that I don't understand your situation' and get them to explain it," she said. Counsellors also need to have an understanding of the intergenerational trauma involved in having one's culture, social structure, language and land base wrenched away, she added.

> It's important to understand that whole background…the history that Aboriginal clients come with, the whole residential school thing and even though they may not have been in residential school themselves, even though their parents might not have been, it's still part of the history that's carried.

Peggy went on to explain that discussing worldview with clients would depend a great deal on the education level of the particular client:

> I don't think you can expect clients to articulate their worldview. As counsellors we have a responsibility of doing some research on the worldview…and the cultural norms of clients we work with…Counsellors who are working with Indigenous clients need to know about 'relationality'—how everything is related, how everything is connected.

She said this worldview is common to many Indigenous individuals, not just those raised on reserves and in rural communities. "It's not an individualistic worldview. It's very collective and very connected to one's surroundings and to the environment, to the trees, to everything around you. That's what White people call spirituality," she explained.

We then discussed one aspect of Indigenous worldview, the ethic of non-interference, which is a belief that one person doesn't have the right to tell another what to do, even if that individual is a child. Not understanding this ethic has resulted in many misunderstandings between Euro-Canadians and Indigenous peoples. "So if you believe in the ethic of non-interference, you obviously wouldn't believe in directive counselling," said Peggy. She made it clear that she wouldn't want someone to counsel her that way:

> For me, I would feel like 'here's another one telling me what to do. I really like my clients to come up with their own answers and I can some way or another guide them so that the answers are coming from them…if I give them answers, I'm just another person telling them what to do again.

She suggested that counsellors learn to listen well to their client's words and body language so that they can begin to understand the particular client's worldview and beliefs around connectedness, respect, health, and ways of healing.

Recommending Indigenous healing approaches to promote health, such as sweat lodges and healing circles, can be a very delicate topic, explained Peggy. If Euro-Canadian counsellors are going to do so, they need to be very knowledgeable about who is leading the ceremonies. "Those are options and you need to be aware of them, but you also need to be very aware of who you're directing people to because there are so many unethical things that go on within sweat lodge ceremonies and different so-called healing ceremonies," she said. "There are as many quacks out there as in any other field." She suggests presenting options to clients and letting them make the decisions about what would be helpful.

When asked about the appropriateness of Euro-Canadian counsellors participating in Indigenous cultural activities, Peggy suggested that this is acceptable only if "they're doing it for their own understanding, for their own growth. If they're doing it just to be seen as someone taking part in community activities, then it's of no meaning. And it's seen by the people in the community as that—as kind of showing off."

Our conversation moved to the topic of helpful interventions in specific situations apart from Indigenous healing approaches. Peggy recommended that rather than use particular interventions, counsellors need to allow clients to tell their story, listen very intensely to what is said, and then work intuitively, picking up more information over time. "Individual counsellors will find their own tools, like storytelling, that may work well for them, but this still has to fit the personality, beliefs and comfort level of the counsellor," she explained. She also uses humor when appropriate but suggested that when working with Indigenous clients, counsellors not use humor if they are just trying to put themselves at ease. "With many of the clients that I have seen, there is really not a lot of chance to bring humor in," she said. "For instance, when murder or suicide or sexual abuse are involved, I think it would be disrespectful to even attempt humor."

When working with clients struggling with addictions, Peggy explained that it's important to try and understand how, when and why the addictive behaviors began "because there's so much that goes on behind addictions". From her perspective, using a medical model where people have to acknowledge that they are addicts over and over again is not helpful. "You're never free. You carry that baggage around with you all the time," she said. That's why clients often exchange one addiction for another, she added.

If the presenting issue relates to family violence, Peggy suggested speaking with clients about how colonization and Christianity have impacted Indigenous family and community life. "If you look at roles and homes before colonization, family violence wasn't there," she said. She speaks with her clients about how colonization has resulted in so much anger and violence and how many people have "taken on White roles." She explained that she helps clients see the violence in a larger context.

For clients suffering from depression, and in fact for all clients, Peggy recommended working holistically. "I think exercise and nutrition are as much a part of depression as anything else. What clients eat and what they do affects how they are," she said.

In situations where clients are very angry, Peggy believes that it is important to let them vent their anger: "Sometimes that's hard to do if you're the counsellor and you're scared." Although sports or something physical can be an excellent way to disperse some of the anger, the client "is still going to have to talk about the anger and where it came from—to get to the root of it."

Peggy noted that some clients find it difficult to voice their concerns. "Sometimes we need to let the person be silent and that's fine. If they're shy, that's a different thing—make them feel good about who they are." She indicated that the person will find his or her voice with encouragement.

According to Peggy, regardless of the client's presenting problems, the relationship-building and healing process begins in the very first session. Therefore, the counsellor's conduct is fundamental to developing a therapeutic alliance. She suggests that Euro-counsellors should be as honest and personal as possible in the initial session:

> An appropriate amount of self-disclosure is important, as is trying to make some kind of relational connections. You can't expect clients to talk to you about

> important things until they can trust you. And part of that trust is knowing who you are. Once you've made the connections, the rapport will fall into place.

Peggy recommended holding off on having clients complete informed consent forms and other paper work until after they come to know the counsellor better, rather than presenting these forms immediately. "I don't ask people to do that before I've told them who I am and found out who they are. I don't think it's fair. A lot of counsellors use the forms because they're uncomfortable at the first session and they use those forms as something to do."

In terms of ending counselling sessions, Peggy suggested that counsellors should ask clients if they would like to see the counsellor again: "I would give them choice…as much choice as they can have in the situation as possible. Would you like to come and see me again? When would you like to see me? Where would you like to see me?" She shared that the specific way in which counselling proceeds and ends depends on the client and on the relationship between client and counsellor. She also highlighted the need to attend to clients' long-term needs before counselling ends:

> You need to talk about it because the client may have developed a real dependency on you. In many cases, when working with children, you become one of the only stable people in their lives so you've formed a real bond with them. You need to make sure that somebody is going to take your place when counselling finishes.

In closing our interview, we spoke briefly about how Euro-Canadian counsellors can become more competent when working with Indigenous clients. Peggy believes that university programs could help by giving counsellor trainees some courses. "Have them taught by some Indigenous people, get them out into Indigenous communities. A lot of university students never get that exposure. They need to get out and meet people…get a cultural experience," she said. Exposure to cultural experiences taught by well-respected community members would be a real asset because one cannot understand another culture by reading a book, she added.

I didn't want our conversation to end, as I had been so enriched by Peggy's wisdom and insight, but I knew it was time to go. Although she wouldn't call herself an Elder, she certainly embodies the qualities I would look for in someone who is a true Elder.

CHAPTER V

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

This chapter sets out the overarching themes and corresponding suggestions that arose during the conversations with the Elder-Counsellors. The themes encapsulate the direct and indirect suggestions made during the interviews about how the counselling environment, relationship, counselling process, and interventions can be made more relevant, culturally appropriate, and helpful in situations where Euro-Canadian counsellors are counselling Indigenous clients. The nature of each theme and the subsequent suggestions are described and excerpts of participants' interview responses are provided as support for theme content.

Understanding the Elder-Counsellors' Suggestions

Some of the suggestions provided by the Elder-Counsellors are in the form of teachings in which the Elder-Counsellor explains what he or she would do in a particular situation or what he or she would find a culturally appropriate attitude or skill. This form of suggestion making reflects the aspect of Indigenous worldview that relates to non-interference or not telling another what they should do. My understanding of this cultural method of sharing knowledge and wisdom made it possible for me to recognize what the Elder-Counsellors were sharing and how it would be a helpful response from a Euro-Canadian counsellor in a particular situation. In order to make these indirect suggestions more accessible to Euro-Canadian counsellors, I situated the Elder-Counsellors' responses where they fit best. As a further bridge to understanding, I shaped the themes and suggestions into recommendations to make them clearer.

Develop Self-Understanding

The Elder-Counsellors noted that knowing oneself is a key first step to becoming a better human being and a helpful counsellor. Their suggestions for Euro-Canadian counsellors who work with Indigenous clients include working through one's own issues, understanding White privilege, developing intuition, and finding a personal spiritual connection.

Work Through Your Personal Issues

Whether the counsellor is new to counselling or has been working with others for some time, the Elder-Counsellors agreed that continuing to address personal issues was important if the counsellor is going to be effective in understanding the issues clients bring and how best to assist them. Some of the comments reflect an indirect way of advising Euro-Canadian counsellors on the importance of addressing their own issues.

White Thunderbird Woman stated that "It's very, very important as a counsellor, as a psychologist, as a doctor, anybody who works with Aboriginal people, to really have done your work because you can only take your client as far as you are." Spirit Eagle also suggested that all counsellors "need to have done our own work and continue to keep doing our work," while Bessie believes the issues she has worked through give her patience and understanding. "I've been there, done that," she said. Peggy explained that "I did a lot of work on myself before I started working with other people—that's been vital to my counselling career."

Accept That You Have Privilege

White privilege refers to those from the dominant culture having opportunities and access to resources that may be denied to those from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For example, Indigenous peoples have had less access to the same kind of educational opportunities, have not been hired for positions for which they are qualified, and have found it difficult to access various kinds of services. Not having equal opportunities has created distrust of those from the dominant society. Although this is a difficult subject for many Euro-Canadian counsellors to acknowledge, let alone accept, some of the Elder-Counsellors raised it as important issue for counsellors to consider and address.

Peggy spoke about the well-disseminated belief that counselling is a culture-free endeavor: "To think something is culture-free is a thought that would come from somebody who thinks they don't need to know the culture." She added that "if they are White, they've got privilege…without them doing anything, they've got it. And White privilege has just an overwhelming impact in counselling."

Although the other Elder-Counsellors did not use the words White privilege, the notion that some Euro-Canadians believe they are *superior* to Indigenous peoples was raised. White Thunderbird Woman, Bessie and Sandra all spoke of experiences in childhood where they were not accepted or understood and were belittled for being Indigenous. Spirit Eagle spoke about it in the context of counselling by emphasizing the importance of treating "clients with dignity and worthiness" and not coming "from a place of power over them."

Sandra explained that:

> There are so many people who feel they are not prejudiced and that they are not condescending or not feeling superior but in fact their attitude towards how Aboriginal people do things, such as child rearing, shows that they are—whether they know it or not.

Develop Your Intuition

Developing intuition is a suggestion made by the Elder-Counsellors to help Euro-Canadian counsellors learn to draw on their life experiences as well as acquire a deep understanding of what motivates people to seek a healthier, more balanced life. This intuition needs to arise out of an understanding of the differences in culture, worldview and life contexts.

White Thunderbird Woman believes that intuition is "just like a muscle—if you forget to use it, it gets lazy and you don't remember it anymore…So I listen to the spirits and the spirits will say to me "ask her this'…That's what all traditional healers do—try to find the imbalance, help people to come back into balance and to work with them to keep them in balance." Spirit Eagle noted that for him, having intuition goes beyond the logical and rational. "Healing requires all aspects of the healer to be brought to bear and if it's only intellectual, you're going to be pretty limited in how effective you're going to be," he explained. Peggy spoke about going with "what your gut tells you" and Bessie stated that "it helps having lived through what my clients are now living through, the kinds of problems they have" for this assists in knowing how to respond in the most effective way.

Find Your Spiritual Connection

Some of the Elder-Counsellors spoke to the importance of Euro-Canadian counsellors being spiritually connected if they want to understand and work with Indigenous clients, as the belief in the interconnectedness of all things is fundamental to Indigenous worldview. White Thunderbird Woman explained the importance of being able to help clients become spiritually connected. "How do you do that? You have to know who you are spiritually," she said. Sandra said that "it is really important that you acknowledge the spiritual part of your life." Spirit Eagle noted that being open to the spiritual aspect of life helps the counsellor come from the "heart and soul place." "If I don't have my own spiritual connection, whatever the shape of that may be, I'm going to be coming from human cleverness. I don't have the grounding," he said.

Understand Indigenous Realities

The importance of Euro-Canadian counsellors having a well-developed knowledge and deep understanding of Indigenous history, culture, worldview and the context of Indigenous lives cannot be overstated. All Elder-Counsellors emphasized how the past has impacted the trust available to Indigenous individuals when they interact with Euro-Canadians. Since trust is vital to the development and sustenance of a therapeutic relationship between counsellor and client, it is imperative that counsellors have a wide-ranging knowledge of Indigenous history, as described by Indigenous writers, and have developed familiarity with cultural traditions, both past and present. In addition, developing an appreciation of Indigenous collectivistic worldview and being able to integrate "other ways of knowing" into one's counselling repertoire will increase cultural empathy and understanding. Having personal cultural experiences rather than just book knowledge was deemed advantageous.

Comprehend the Impact of Colonization

The Elder-Counsellors explained that if Euro-Canadian counsellors hope to understand the intergenerational trauma experienced by Canada's Indigenous peoples because of colonization, they would need to comprehend Canadian history from a fresh, unbiased perspective. To reiterate, colonization in this thesis refers to the systemic marginalization of Indigenous peoples by the dominant society resulting from policies developed by governments that aimed at assimilation of Indigenous peoples and destruction of their cultural identities and community connections. It also incorporates the racist attitudes held by many members of the dominant society that prevented Indigenous peoples from being treated with equality. It is understandable that this history may not only have a bearing on the issues that bring an Indigenous client into counselling but will also impact the counselling relationship between a Euro-Canadian counsellor and Indigenous client.

Sandra stated that "The history that Canadians get is that all these great White explorers discovered this land. Well, if those great White explorers didn't have great Native guides and great Native women who provided for them, they would never have survived." Peggy emphasized that "It's important to understand that whole background…the history that Aboriginal clients come with, the whole residential school thing…it's still part of the history that's carried." Spirit Eagle explained that "non-Native people belong to a population of colonizers and we belong to a population of the colonized…so in a very real sense there's a power imbalance." According to White Thunderbird Woman, coming to understand imperialism and colonization "should not be an elective, it should be a required course" because she deemed it essential "to understand the historical roots of Aboriginal people."

Appreciate Indigenous Worldview and Culture

The Elder-Counsellors emphasized that appreciating Indigenous worldview and culture is a precursor to developing therapeutic relationships with Indigenous clients. Most vital of the concepts to understand is "life process thinking" or "relationality," two terms used to denote the interconnection of all things including those deemed nonliving in Western culture. Appreciating this concept will help Euro-Canadian counsellors to understand the Indigenous beliefs around being connected to others, spirituality, not interfering in the lives of others, Indigenous healing practices, and differences in the patterns of discourse.

The interconnection of all things. Peggy spoke about the importance of understanding " relationality—how everything is related, how everything is connected. It's not an individualistic worldview. It's very collective and very connected to one's surroundings and to the environment." She says it's "what White people call spirituality." Spirit Eagle referred to this concept as "life process thinking," the knowledge that all things, animate and inanimate, are connected. It is the way in which Indigenous people see and understand the world, he explained.

Spirituality. Sandra emphasized the importance of counsellors understanding and being willing to address the topic of spirituality with Indigenous clients. "Spirituality is a very, very important part of Aboriginal life," but is a component that can take many and varied forms. "I would invite people to share with me what they believe," she suggested. White Thunderbird Woman spoke about the difference between religion and spirituality: "If you are really connected spiritually, not religiously but spiritually—you understand that connection of love to all things and you don't see yourself as dominant over anything else—you can do so much with Aboriginal clients because all you have to do is connect on a spiritual level."

Non-interference. Understanding the ethic of non-interference, the belief that it is not right to tell another what to do, is also integral to comprehending Indigenous worldview. Bessie provided an excellent example of this ethic when asked whether she would suggest counsellors participate in Inuit cultural activities. "It's up to the counsellors if they want to try different things or if they just want to stay in one spot, " she said. She then added that she was pleased with my willingness to come north to see what life was like in the community she lived—an indirect comment encouraging participation in the culture by Euro-Canadian counsellors. Sandra also explained this ethic in a indirect manner by emphasizing that many Euro-Canadians think Indigenous people "are just not doing it right" because they have different beliefs and values around family and community, around acquiring material possessions and around raising children. She spoke about judgements made by some from the dominant culture and how hurtful this is to Indigenous individuals:

> There are so many people who feel they are not prejudiced and that they are not condescending or not feeling superior but in fact their attitude towards how

Aboriginal people do things, such as child rearing, shows that they are—whether they know it or not.

Cultural understanding. Developing an awareness of Indigenous cultural activities and ceremonies, including sweat lodges and healing circles, would also be useful for Euro-Canadian counsellors. White Thunderbird Woman recommended that counsellors learn the meanings of Indigenous ceremonies and rituals: "What's behind a sweat lodge for example? Not just going to a sweat lodge but finding out the teachings behind it. Why do we pray with tobacco? What is behind it?" Spirit Eagle suggested that it is essential for counsellors to "know some of the different cultures by actually participating in some of the ceremonies." Sandra said that if Euro-Canadian counsellors "are willing to take part and enjoy Aboriginal celebrations and ceremonies, the message to Aboriginal people is that 'I respect and enjoy sharing in this significant part of your life'". Peggy believes that participating would be acceptable if "they're doing it for their own understanding, for their own growth". Otherwise it is just "showing off," she said. She added that learning from respected Indigenous leaders would be a real asset and that counsellors "get out and meet people…get a cultural experience."

Communication style. Indigenous ways of knowing and understanding the world may influence voice modulation and pacing and this is something that the Elder-Counsellors wanted Euro-Canadian counsellors to consider, both in terms of the client's way of speaking and in how the counsellor responds to the client. The importance of silence in Indigenous culture was also discussed. The Elder-Counsellors pointed out that Euro-Canadians counsellors need to become accepting of their own discomfort around silence and appreciate its value as a way of allowing the process of relationship building to unfold.

Bessie explained that Inuit clients have a different way of speaking and it takes them time to think about what they want to say: "Give them time to speak, and if they don't answer right away, don't ask for it, " she said. She added that counsellors may want to "just be there and be silent with them (the clients)." Peggy also explained that the pace of speaking can be slower and the volume lower:

> We have to know what patterns of discourse are like…Especially with the older generation, there's definitely a pause after speaking, that's to show respect as much as anything and to think about what they said. Within most European societies, it's almost disrespectful not to talk right away. It looks as though you're not interested.

She noted that being silent with a client is fine unless the client is shy in which case he or she may need encouragement and support to begin speaking. White Thunderbird Woman suggested that counsellors "speak in a low tone" and that some clients may need support before they can share their story so counsellors can help their clients to "breathe, because people who are very silent and very angry hold their breath a lot." Spirit Eagle also said it is important for counsellors to "be comfortable with silences because sometimes people have trouble finding their voice". However, he added that if clients continue to have difficulty for a long, long time he takes them through a breathing exercise. "I've sat in silence with someone for forty minutes and they finally can't handle the silence anymore so they break it," he said.

Be Flexible in Structuring Counselling

The Elder-Counsellors spoke to the importance of counsellor flexibility in creating a therapeutic space for Indigenous clients. This flexibility needs to include the place sessions are held, the time set aside for sessions, when paperwork is completed and who attends counselling sessions. Creating a healing environment for clients is the responsibility of the counsellor and this theme encompasses how to provide a space that is welcoming, safe and therapeutic for Indigenous clients. The most salient aspects of worldview that need to be considered by Euro-Canadian counsellors when scheduling and arranging appointments with Indigenous clients are an understanding of Indigenous time orientation (living in the present) and a *being* rather than a *doing* or action orientation. Again, it is important to understand that suggestions by Elder-Counsellors can take an indirect form in which they refer to what they have found beneficial and helpful, implying that Euro-Canadian counsellors may also find these ideas helpful.

Make the Physical Surroundings Welcoming

All the Elder-Counsellors agreed that offices are sometimes the only practical place to meet with clients and that while the physical atmosphere can be important, it is the warmth and openness of the counsellor that counts the most. White Thunderbird Woman said that, "Sometimes an office is the only place you can meet…the most important thing in order to reach your clients is to create a place of love and equality, not inequality. Soft chairs, blankets—because it's really important that there are blankets there for your clients to wrap themselves in—water, candles…a smudge." Peggy pointed out that counselling can take place anywhere where both parties feel safe but that getting rid of clutter is important when working in an office: "If you work in cluttered surroundings, it kind of says what your counselling is like—it's kind of cluttered and all over the place." Sandra pointed out that although she has various Indigenous objects in her office, it is the attitude of the counsellor that is more important than the surroundings: "You can go into people's offices…they can have nothing or very little but if you feel welcomed and warm and accepted…it doesn't matter what's on the wall."

Be Open to Out-Of-Office Sessions

Understanding and appreciating the worldview of Indigenous clients, especially the belief in *relationality*, will help Euro-Canadian counsellors consider the value of meeting with clients in places other than an office. The Elder-Counsellors suggested, either directly or indirectly, that being open to other places where counselling could take place might aid Euro-Canadian counsellors in connecting with Indigenous clients.

Spirit Eagle suggested that, if possible, taking clients out of the office can be very beneficial to providing a healing environment: "Walk on a beach, walk along the river, walk in the forest. If you're in a city, go walk in a park…somewhere where you can touch the earth…." White Thunderbird Woman also does ceremony outside: "We sit on the earth together in a very safe place and we drum and we sing and I do energy work and smudge." Bessie said that she meets with clients where they feel at home—their home, a coffee shop, on the land. "If they want to meet somewhere else. I'd do that," she said. Sandra agreed that being outside the office may be beneficial: "Sometimes we have gone for walks and we've walked around and around." Peggy explained that "you can counsel a person anywhere, so long as you're both feeling safe and comfortable in the situation."

Be Accommodating About Counselling Times

According to the Elder-Counsellors, it is helpful for Euro-Canadian counsellors to be as flexible as possible around setting counselling times. This flexibility shows clients that the counsellor values the relationship more than time on a clock, which fits with the Indigenous worldview around time orientation and connection.

Bessie suggested that it is helpful for the counsellor "to be more flexible about the session time especially for people who are suicidal or just coming out from an abusive home". Spirit Eagle pointed out that it is ideal when the counsellor can let the work with the client dictate the session length: "If I don't have a session with another client, then I'll often go over if it seems appropriate." Peggy noted that if she sees someone occasionally she tries to finish "when it feels appropriate to finish—maybe ten minutes or it may take three or four hours." White Thunderbird Woman explained that as often as possible she only makes two appointments a day "because my clients are with me for four hours sometimes. It is very unethical to work with somebody and send them off on their way if you're not finished with them at that moment." In contrast, Sandra said she tries to "stick within the 50-minute hour, recognizing that there are times when you need to go with what is happening at the time and what you feel is in the best interest (of the client)."

Be Adaptable Around the Timing of Paperwork

Although having clients sign confidentiality agreements and complete other agency paperwork is a necessary part of providing counselling services to clients, the Elder-Counsellors recommended that, when working with Indigenous clients, this requirement be handled carefully and with understanding and intuition.

White Thunderbird Woman explained that:

> Filling in forms is a very oppressive task to give many Aboriginal people—especially older people who don't read well, who don't understand what you are asking. It's very impersonal when someone comes into an office first of all and they say who they are and then someone says 'fill in this form'. I don't think that should ever happen.

A way around this is to fill in the forms together with the client once some rapport has been developed, she added. Sandra suggested that counsellors "sit and listen and then, maybe, towards the end pull out the paperwork…you don't have to be rigid in how you do stuff…some of that information you can get in the next session or two." Spirit Eagle expressed the same view: "I don't have a problem with confidentiality agreements, it's a matter of how you get them and when…if the timing is not appropriate, then you're not going to have a therapeutic relationship." Peggy doesn't ask clients to fill out forms until she has told them who she is and found out who they are. "A lot of counsellors use the forms because they're uncomfortable at the first session and they use those forms as something to do."

Be Open to Who Attends Sessions

According to the Elder-Counsellors, Euro-Canadian counsellors will be more effective in their work with Indigenous clients if they utilize their understanding of Indigenous worldview to support clients as they work through their issues. What this means is having insight into the significance of connectedness and relationship, both in terms of extended family and community. In addition, understanding the effects of colonization and the impact that residential schools had on individuals, families and communities will assist counsellors in having a context for counselling. The Elder-Counsellors pointed out that many presenting issues arise in relationship with others and therefore working with the individual client may not be enough. Although the Elder-Counsellors explained that they usually start working with individuals, they expand to include family and community members when it is safe and possible to do so. Some of the Elder-Counsellors used the indirect method of making suggestions that is often found among Indigenous peoples. One Elder-Counsellor also pointed out that because of the importance of relationships, ending counselling needs to be handled with sensitivity to ensure ongoing support is available to clients.

Peggy explained that "you can't completely counsel someone outside the system that they work in because they come from a complex set of relationships…particularly in Indigenous counselling, you need to look at those relationships". White Thunderbird Woman stated that: "If there's something going on in that individual, they're affecting everyone in their family. So it's important that the entire family—the entire community heal. So I begin with the individual…and then I work with the entire family." Sandra explained that she likes "to work with individuals but I also like to include and work with family if that is possible" but if the client is "in a really unsafe environment, you're not going to pull those people in". Bessie works with clients on an individual basis "even if they say they need family counselling" until she sees that the client is empowered enough to speak his or her truth in a family meeting.

Since relationships are vital to growth and continued healing for Indigenous peoples, Euro-Canadian counsellors should ensure that supports are in place once counselling ends. Peggy mentioned the importance of attending to clients' long-term needs: "You need to make sure that somebody is going to take your place when counselling finishes."

Build Connections with Clients

In light of the history of colonialism and imperialist thinking and policies that resulted in the marginalization of Indigenous peoples throughout Canada, Euro-Canadian counsellors must be especially mindful about the way they enter into *relationship* with Indigenous clients. The Elder-Counsellors discussed some of the features that may help Euro-Canadian counsellors develop a therapeutic bond with Indigenous clients. These include positive counsellor attitudes such as coming from a hopeful stance, being open and using self-disclosure, treating clients as individuals thereby keeping stereotyping to a minimum, believing that clients are the experts of their own lives, and not using a directive counselling style. Special care must be taken to ensure that counsellor attitudes and approaches are as respectful and egalitarian as possible and that counsellors do not favor techniques over relationships.

Come From a Hopeful Stance

The Elder-Counsellors spoke of the importance of not giving up on clients, no matter how hopeless clients may feel. Sandra maintained that: "There is always hope and there's always room to change…if they're ready. And if they're not, you've given them something to think about and not look so negatively on themselves." Spirit Eagle spoke of the importance of being in the heart place so that positive energy and hopefulness can flow from counsellor to client. "My focus is helping the person find wellness factors that they can put into their life and to start feeling good about themselves." Bessie explained that counsellors need to have patience and "believe that people can and do change". White Thunderbird Woman talked about making hope tangible with clients: "It doesn't matter where you come from—whether you're Jewish or Catholic or African, what is it that we do for hope? It's ritual. So everything is about hope, that's what ritual is."

Be Open and Use Self-Disclosure

Since so much of Indigenous worldview rotates around "relationality" and connectedness, the Elder-Counsellors felt it would be helpful if Euro-Canadians counsellors were willing to be open about who they are and not be afraid of using appropriate self-disclosure. This is especially important since Euro-Canadian counsellors are from the dominant society and being open would allow Indigenous clients to get a sense of the values and beliefs of the counsellor. Again, some of the suggestions have been made indirectly and point to "ways of being" that may assist Euro-Canadian counsellors as they work with Indigenous clients.

Peggy explained that "an appropriate amount of self-disclosure is important, as is trying to make some kind of relational connections. You can't expect clients to talk to you about important things until they can trust you. And part of that trust is knowing who you are." Bessie pointed out that it is important to share personal information with clients to increase their level of hope and trust: "I tell my clients I went through this or that." Sandra hopes Euro-Canadian counsellors will create an atmosphere of openness, genuineness, and acceptance: "The importance is on the relationship more than who you are." She also suggested that counselling programs need to be more supportive of counsellors expressing their personal spirituality and feels it isn't helpful "when they suggest you can't bring religion in and you can't share that part of yourself." Spirit Eagle explained that counsellors will only connect with Indigenous clients if they are open and come from the "heart and soul place". White Thunderbird Woman mentioned the importance of being open about who are: "Trust and compassion are not enough…you must open your heart…break down all barriers so that they know you are one with them…We're always taught to remain professional. If you remain disconnected from your client, on any level, you will never reach them."

Treat Clients as Unique Individuals

As important as it is to take into account culture and worldview when working with Indigenous clients, the Elder-Counsellors also emphasized that it is essential not to make generalizations based on appearances or on cultural assumptions. Sandra pointed out that "there are a lot of different Aboriginal Nations and although there are things they have in common, there are many things that are unique in different communities." She explained that the bottom line is to respect each client as an individual:

> who they are, what they are, where they come from, and whether they're down and out and smell, whether they are the worst criminal you can think of, or whether they're a socialite…treat them with respect and dignity and care because they deserve that.

Spirit Eagle commented that it is important to remember that there is no "one approach" for Indigenous clients: "We not only come from a wide range of tribes, we have had a wide range of different experiences with the larger society." He added that it is essential to learn about the individual client from that client. "Have the skills to move out of a very narrow approach and open your heart and be in the world of the client." White Thunderbird Woman also talked about coming to know each client as an individual: "You need to listen to their stories and in their stories you will find out where they are at in their lives."

Verify Clients as the Experts

The Elder-Counsellors felt that it is important for Euro-Canadian counsellors to support clients as the experts of their own healing. This involves helping clients understand that they (the clients) have all the necessary abilities and skills to support their own growth and healing and that counsellors are there to put forward options that had not previously been considered.

Spirit Eagle emphasized that each client has his or her own story and own journey so counsellors need to ensure "that clients are always in control of their own therapeutic journey." Bessie noted that the clients are the experts on their lives and although counsellors can present options, it is the clients who make the final decisions about what they will do. Peggy agreed that she wants "clients to come up with their own answers." Sandra explained that she asks clients what they see as their options: "They'll guide you. You may help facilitate change but it's up to them to do it." White Thunderbird Woman pointed out that individuals often look outside of themselves for answers when the answers are within them: "All we have to do as practitioners is to get those people into their bodies. They'll find the answers."

Don't Use a Directive Counselling Style

Although many counselling approaches try to mitigate the power disparity between counsellor and client, many counsellors still maintain an expert, professional stance with clients. The five Elder-Counsellors all agreed that, given the history of colonization and its devastating impact on Indigenous individuals and communities, it was important to use a counselling approach with Indigenous clients that is egalitarian rather than directive.

Spirit Eagle explained that "in order for healing to take place, you have to empower people, not come from a place of power over them." White Thunderbird Woman said that at times Indigenous clients do "want you to give them the answers, just like anybody else does…but by doing that, you're doing them a great disservice because it perpetuates the whole fostering dependency on someone else." Peggy stated that "if I give them answers, I'm just another person telling them what to do again." Sandra suggested that "one of the major ways of speaking and being is not that 'I'm here to advise you, I know and can solve your problem for you'. Native people don't want you to solve their problems for them." She also pointed out more than once that Euro-Canadian counsellors need to work hard at not coming across as 'superior.' "The importance is on the relationship more than who you are…you have to have empathy not superiority," she said. She added that many Euro-Canadians are condescending to Indigenous individuals even when they don't think they are because they denigrate the way "Aboriginal people do things."

Use Holistic, Culturally Appropriate Approaches

Throughout our conversations, the Elder-Counsellors spoke about the importance of relationship, the necessity of tailoring the work to the individual, and the value in being flexible. They stressed that working holistically with Indigenous clients fit well with a worldview that emphasizes connectedness and that this will help clients create more balance and harmony in their lives. Again, understanding the Indigenous context at a deep level requires that Euro-Canadian counsellors have a thorough comprehension of Indigenous history and how loss of Indigenous language, family connections, and culture, plus racist policies, attitudes and marginalization, have impacted Indigenous individuals, families and communities.

Some of the Elder-Counsellors spoke about the importance of improving physical health through exercise and nutrition and the impact of this on emotional and mental well-being. Others emphasized the importance of making spiritual connections as of way of finding a healthier way of living. They also pointed out that relying on specific techniques would be counterproductive although utilizing storytelling and metaphor, understanding Indigenous humour, and allowing clients to express their anger may make the process of counselling go more smoothly. Finally, the issue of recommending traditional healing approaches was also discussed.

Help Clients Find Balance

Indigenous beliefs and values give emphasis to the importance of living a balanced and harmonious life. When life is out of balance, people suffer distress and loss of purpose. Some of the Elder-Counsellors spoke to this concept and explained that there is no "one way" that Euro-Canadian counsellors can help clients find balance—it depends on the client, on the situation, and what the counsellor is comfortable with.

White Thunderbird Woman explained: "If you separate one part from the whole, you're fragmenting things and you're not creating balance. She suggested working experientially as it "is very powerful because…they (clients) are really taking control of their lives. It becomes a very complete experience. The more senses that are involved, the more people remember things…and to Aboriginal people, experience is the most important way we learn." Spirit Eagle spoke of counsellors assisting clients find balance and harmony by helping them (clients) "to touch their own healing power from within them and blossom out of their own healing power." To do this, he suggests helping clients appreciate the skills that kept them alive and then showing them how to "transform those skills into healing and wellness." Sandra believes that helping clients develop their strengths will increase their sense of balance and harmony: "What you're looking for as a counsellor is to help build resiliency or help strengthen the resiliency that's already there." Peggy spoke of the importance of nutrition and exercise: "What clients eat and what they do affects how they are."

Address the Root of the Problem

Discussing various presenting problems with the Elder-Counsellors and asking how best to approach these concerns when working with Indigenous clients raised an interesting issue—the importance of searching for and finding the root of the difficulty. Although clients may come with common presenting issues such as depression, anxiety, or addictions, there is usually much more behind this than what is brought forward as a possible cause. For this reason, it is important for Euro-Canadian counsellors to understand the historical context of Indigenous peoples and the marginalization and intergenerational trauma experienced by many because of residential schools and colonization.

White Thunderbird Woman explained: "You need to find out what's behind them [presenting problems such as addictions, family violence] and work on a very deep, deep therapeutic level helping them deal with the pain, not the addiction. The addiction will go away on its own when you get to the pain." Sandra suggested that Euro-Canadian counsellors help clients determine why and how issues developed: "I invite them to look at this dysfunctional way of coping and…what healthier ways can we consider?" Bessie pointed out that for presenting concerns like childhood sexual assault, family violence, depression, and addictions, it is beneficial to help clients understand family behavior patterns and how childhood experiences influence and affect their current relationships. Peggy emphasized the importance of considering the client's history and context so that the counsellor can help the client "talk about the anger and where it came from—to get to the root of it."

Don't be Bound to Specific Techniques

The Elder Counsellors agreed that relying on specific techniques would not be helpful and that Euro-Canadian counsellors need to utilize their understanding of Indigenous realities and their intuition and wisdom to find interventions that will be helpful with the specific client at a particular time.

Spirit Eagle suggested that helpful interventions emerge from "life process thinking," rather than from "linear reductionist mechanistic thinking," which relies on techniques and strategies. He pointed out. "You can learn techniques but if you are not coming from the soul place, the heart place, it's an intellectual exercise in which you are trying to use human cleverness." Peggy recommended that Euro-Canadian counsellors allow clients to tell their story and then work intuitively to discover more information over time. This will help the counsellor know what may help that particular client. She also said that whatever interventions counsellors use they "still have to fit the personality, beliefs, and comfort level of the counsellor." White Thunderbird Woman explained that "If you want to work with Aboriginal people, you have to start using your creative tools, which are more alternative, because you need to be able to understand energy." Sandra noted that counsellors need flexibility and wisdom when deciding on helpful interventions. "You need to have respect for the client and where they are at and whether they are willing to do certain things…the underlying consideration is what is the comfort level of this person and is it going to be a healing process for them….they'll guide you…you are the catalyst."

Help Clients Connect Their Bodies and Feelings

White Thunderbird Woman believes that to work effectively with Aboriginal clients, it is important to help bring them back into their bodies, to help them to connect their spirit and emotions to their bodies. This is viewed as critical because many Indigenous individuals have learned to disconnect from what they feel as a way of coping. "I work with people who are severely traumatized and so I find that conventional therapy, using cognitive and behavioural models, doesn't work. You have to be able to help people connect to spirit right away."

Consider Indigenous Healing Practices

The Elder-Counsellors pointed out that Euro-Canadian counsellors need to be knowledgeable about Indigenous healing approaches and suggest this as an option for Indigenous clients who may be interested. Two of the Elder-Counsellors had concerns that Euro-Canadian counsellors not refer clients to Indigenous healers unless they were certain that those Indigenous healers were well-respected in the Indigenous community.

Since Spirit Eagle conducts sweat lodge ceremonies and other ceremonies, he is aware of practitioners in his community who practice in an authentic and ethical manner and so presents this as an option to clients, even to non-Indigenous clients. In fact, he would encourage Euro-Canadian counsellors to become more informed about Indigenous healing practices so they can come "to know some of the different cultures by actually participating in some of the ceremonies." White Thunderbird Woman uses rituals, ceremonies, and Indigenous healing interventions with clients. "I work with spirit energy and vibration and that's my gift," she said. As well as the practices she uses in her own work, White Thunderbird Woman connects clients with Elders, sweat lodge ceremonies or other holistic practices if they are interested. Bessie also works with clients to connect them with cultural practices if she feels it will help resolve some of their issues.

Peggy suggested that Euro-Canadian counsellors need to be knowledgeable about who they are recommending. She explained that: "Those are options and you need to be aware of them, but you also need to be very aware of who you're directing people to because there are so many unethical things that go on within sweat lodge ceremonies and different so-called healing ceremonies." Sandra doesn't refer clients to Indigenous ceremonies and rituals but she does discuss it as an option: "I would invite them to tell me who might be a healthy person…and who they can really respect…who they should be going to see."

Try Storytelling and Metaphor

The Elder-Counsellors encouraged the use of story telling and metaphor when working with Indigenous clients. Spirit Eagle talked about story telling as an ancient part of the human experience that is powerful because it doesn't present "a direct threat". "I believe there is something in our genetic make-up that responds to generational story-telling," he added. He did emphasize that stories need to be easily understood and resonate with the client. White Thunderbird Woman shared that: "Stories create a place of belonging" so that the client becomes part of the story. This helps them "get what they need out of it" without the counsellor giving them answers. "It's a great technique to get people to value what they are feeling. Often I get this flash that says 'tell this story' or 'say this' and it isn't for me to know why, I just follow my intuition," she explained.

Sandra likes stories, as they are "so effective because they are a form of nurturing. They pass on overt and subliminal messages and they entertain." She believes Indigenous stories are especially powerful. "They give the message that our people are powerful enough to write about and their stories are important enough to share," she said. Peggy emphasized that "individual counsellors will find their own tools, like storytelling, that may work well for them, but this still has to fit the personality, beliefs and comfort level of the counsellor."

Use Humour Appropriately

Within Indigenous communities, humour is a valued and appreciated way of communicating with others. It can lighten tense moments or make a point without making the other feel embarrassed. However, the Elder-Counsellors wanted Euro-Canadian counsellors to be careful in their use of humour so it is not misunderstood or the timing is off.

Sandra explained that "Aboriginal humour is fun humour, it's self deprecating." But she cautioned Euro-Canadian counsellors to be very careful or "it could come across as being racist". Peggy urged counsellors not to use humour if they are trying to put themselves at ease or if dealing with murder, suicide or sexual assault. "With many of the clients I have seen, there is really not a lot of chance to bring humour in," she said. According to Spirit Eagle, teaching others to use humour would not be possible for humour "comes spontaneously within the context of what's going on" between the counsellor and client. "I use humour with every client I work with, even around grief. But again, timing is the essence to this," he added. Bessie also uses humour with her clients:

"We look at situations and try to find the funny side of it." White Thunderbird Woman said: "Laughter is really, really important because what laughter does is it changes the energy you see…And sometimes drumming doesn't help, sometimes breathing doesn't help, sometimes valuing them doesn't help, sometimes loving them doesn't help. But sometimes laughter is all they need."

Allow Clients to Vent Their Anger

All the Elder-Counsellors agreed that allowing clients to vent their anger is an important part of dealing with the issues that bring a person to counselling, especially when the counsellor is from the dominant culture. However, the counsellor needs to ensure that the anger doesn't get out of control.

Peggy explained the importance of allowing clients to vent but agreed that "sometimes that's hard to do if you're the counsellor and you're scared." Sandra suggested allowing clients to express their anger but to be careful not to escalate with them: "I will acknowledge if they're angry…I might say 'you're angry but are you really angry with me?'…I stay very calm and quiet and lower my voice." Spirit Eagle believes it is important to validate the anger but how it is done depends on the context of what the client is going through. Bessie also lets clients express their anger and then "after they calm down, I'd ask them what's going on". White Thunderbird Woman raised the issue that anger "is a coping mechanism, it isn't always bad" but that clients need to move beyond blaming others. She helps clients feel their anger by directing it back to them: "I literally use my hand—because the anger is coming at me and I put it back at them in a gentle way. I constantly bring them back into their anger."

Putting It All Together

Again, the five themes and corresponding recommendations only reflect the main points that were extracted from the interviews with the Elder-Counsellors and then included in the approved narratives (see Table 1.) The discussion chapter that follows examines these themes, which surfaced through the conversations with the five Elder-Counsellors, in relation to the existing literature on multicultural competence and working with Indigenous clients. The chapter will make recommendations for the professional training of counsellors as well as suggest areas that could benefit from further research.

Table 1

Elder-Counsellors' Guidance for Counselling Indigenous Clients

Theme	Suggestions
Develop Self-Understanding	Work through your personal issues Accept that you have privilege Develop your intuition Find your spiritual connection
Understand Indigenous Realities	Comprehend the impact of colonization Appreciate Indigenous worldview and culture
Be Flexible in Structuring Counselling	Make the physical surroundings welcoming Be open to out-of-office sessions Be accommodating about counselling times Be adaptable around the timing of paperwork Be open to who attends sessions
Build Connections with Clients	Come from a hopeful stance Be open and use self-disclosure Treat clients as unique individuals Verify clients as the experts Don't use a directive counselling style
Use Holistic, Culturally-Appropriate Approaches	Help clients find balance Address the root of the problem Don't be bound to specific techniques Help clients connect their bodies and feelings Consider Indigenous healing practices Try story-telling and metaphor Use humour appropriately Allow clients to vent their anger

CHAPTER VI

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INQUIRY

The emergence of technically trained formal helpers such as psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and counsellors is a relatively new phenomenon that has existed for less than one hundred years (Axelson, 1999). Western certified helpers may appear similar to helpers in other societies and cultures and their intent may be the same in that they want to alleviate pain and stress. However, the helping theories and procedures they utilize are based on Western thought and "are interpreted within the context and culture of the modern industrial and technical society" (Axelson, p. 355). This qualitative study has presented the wisdom and insight of Indigenous Elders, who also have training in Western counselling perspectives, to assist Euro-Canadian counsellors in becoming more culturally sensitive when working with Indigenous clients. In this chapter, the Elder-Counsellors' suggestions for Euro-Canadian counsellors are integrated with existing research on the multicultural counselling process and on working with Indigenous clients. Implications for counsellor training, and directions for future research are outlined.

The Importance of the Elder-Counsellors' Narratives

Smith (1999) in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies,* emphasized the importance of Indigenous peoples giving testimony to their own experiences thereby bringing "back into existence a world fragmented and dying" (p. 28). She explained that: "Indigenous people want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes" (p. 28). She added that "these new stories contribute to a collective story in which every Indigenous person has a place" (p.144). In this study, an in-depth reflexive interview technique was used to gain an understanding of the insights and wisdom of the Elder-Counsellors and the words, phrases and intentions of the Elder-Counsellors were conveyed through approved written narratives. The overriding objective of the researcher was to be as culturally sensitive as possible by utilizing a methodology and way of presenting the information collected that would be respectful and ethical and that would clearly put forward the ideas and expressions of the Elder-Counsellors.

Smith (1999) cautioned researchers to be careful about how academic information is selected, arranged and presented and I was ever mindful of that fact. I struggled with the best way to make the wealth of information contained in the interviews and approved narratives more succinct while still being respectful to the "holistic" nature of the narratives. After a great deal of reflection, I felt that pulling out a number of themes within the various interview conversations would still honor what had been shared, as long as readers were directed back to the narratives for a fuller understanding of what had been communicated.

The emerging themes encompassed shared suggestions about how Euro-Canadian counsellors can provide Indigenous clients with a counselling environment, therapeutic relationship, culturally appropriate process, and interventions that will be relevant and helpful. Although the emerging themes provide an overview of the suggestions for Euro-Canadian counsellors to practice more effectively with Indigenous clients, it is the narratives that speak to the depth of the wisdom of the Elder-Counsellors and how much their experiences have shaped their values, beliefs, and insights. All five Elder-Counsellors have utilized their life experiences to develop a deep self-understanding as well as an understanding of others. Out of their own cultural experiences and the knowledge gained about the dominant society and about counselling, they have shared their observations about how Euro-Canadian counsellors can become more culturally sensitive and competent when working with Indigenous clients. Utilizing the themes without immersing oneself in the narratives will provide readers with only a small portion of the wisdom that was shared in the process of completing this study. Smith (1999) would contend that depending on the themes for knowledge continues the tradition of academic ways of thinking without allowing for other ways of knowing.

A Way of Conceptualizing the Themes

The themes of developing self-understanding, understanding Indigenous realities, creating a flexible counselling structure, connecting with clients, and using holistic, culturally appropriate approaches unified the Elder-Counsellors' perspectives on working with Indigenous clients. When considered in conjunction with the Medicine Wheel, a key symbol of holistic healing within some Indigenous cultures, the Elder-Counsellors' recommendations encompass all four elements of health—the spiritual, mental, physical and emotional aspects of life. Four of the themes address primarily one dimension of the Medicine Wheel, the fifth encompasses all four (see Figure 1). For example, developing self-understanding, which includes developing intuition and finding one's spiritual connection, are contained within the spiritual quadrant. Understanding Indigenous realities, which includes coming to know and absorb the culture and worldview, fits well

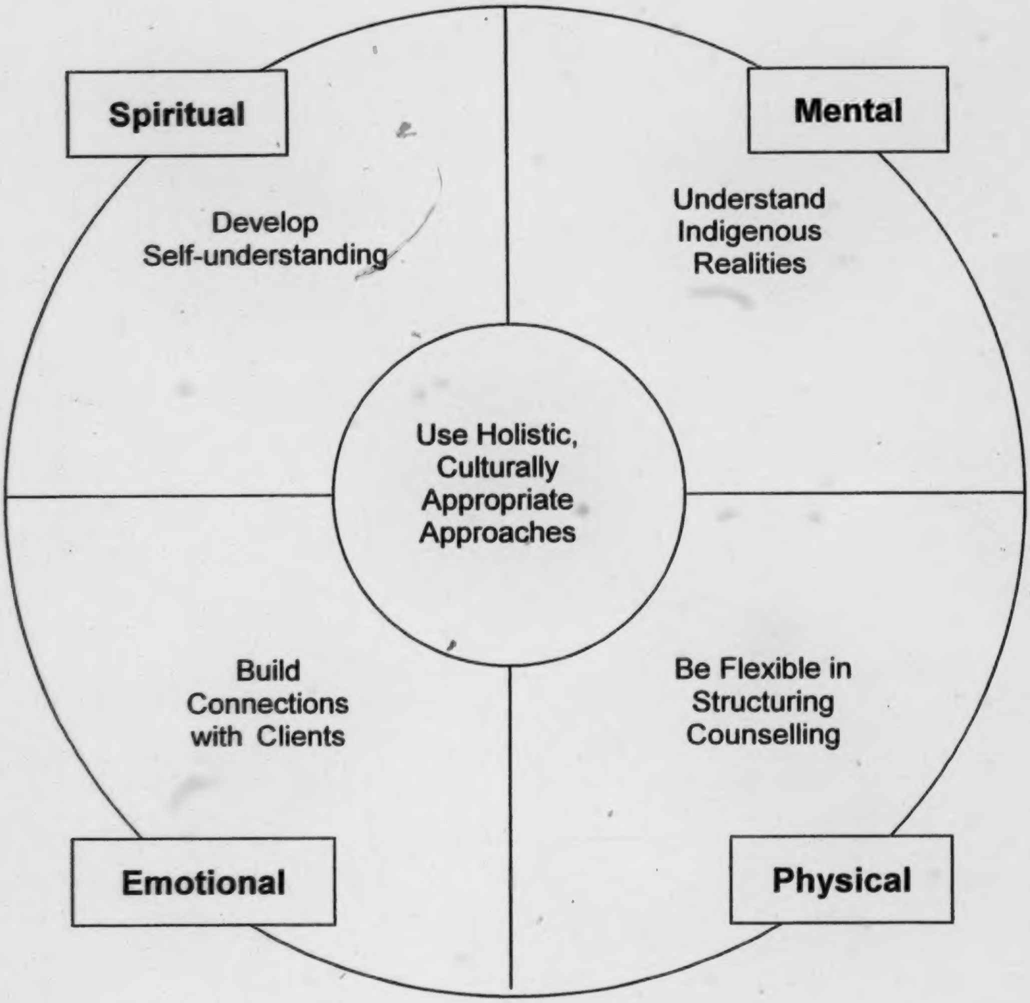
Spiritual
Mental
Develop Self-understanding
Understand Indigenous Realities
Use Holistic, Culturally Appropriate Approaches
Build Connections with Clients
Be Flexible in Structuring Counselling
Emotional
Physical

Figure 1. *A holistic approach to working with Indigenous clients. Elder-Counsellors' suggestion categories and how they fit with the four elements of an Indigenous Medicine Wheel.*

into the mental segment. Creating a flexible counselling structure would be considered the physical realm. Connecting with clients is an obvious fit within the emotional element. The fifth theme, which embraces holistic, culturally appropriate approaches of working with Indigenous clients, has been centred in the nucleus of the Medicine Wheel. This reflects the importance the Elder-Counsellors' placed on working holistically with each client, learning how to draw inspiration from all segments of the Medicine Wheel, and then finding the most effective ways of working with a particular client.

The Elder-Counsellors' insights serve to compliment previous journal articles that came out of the American context (Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Garrett & Herring, 2001; Herring, 1994, 1996, LaFromboise et al., 1990; Sue & Sue, 2003; Trimble & Thurman, 2002). Their suggestions for Euro-Canadian counsellors also extend Canadian research studies on working with Indigenous clients, which focus on how Indigenous peoples facilitate their own healing (McCormick, 1994; Kirmayer, 2000) and on desired counsellor characteristics (Peavy, 1993). Interviewing the Elder-Counsellors also revealed parallels with the experiences of male Euro-Canadian counsellors who work with Indigenous clients as reported in the study by Smith and Morrissette (2001). The findings of this research will be compared with existing literature in the following sections.

Becoming Multiculturally Competent

There are three main perspectives discussed in the literature about becoming multiculturally competent. One is the emic or insider perspective as exemplified in the development of the multicultural counselling competencies by Sue, Arredondo and

McDavis (1992), the second is the etic or outsider perspective as taken by Patterson (1996), and the third is a middle-of-the-road perspective supported by Fischer, Jome and Atkinson (1998).

The Multicultural Counselling Competencies

Comparing what was discovered in this study to the literature on developing multicultural counselling competencies has been an instructive experience. In their seminal work on the multicultural counselling competencies, Sue, Arredondo and McDavis (1992), described culturally competent counsellors as counsellors who are aware of their beliefs, biases and assumptions about behavior, and understand how their worldview and cultural conditioning affects how they practice. Second, they describe culturally competent counsellors as those who actively try to understand the worldview and culture of their culturally different clients. Third, culturally competent counsellors develop and practice culturally sensitive intervention strategies (Sue et al.). These domains each have three dimensions: (a) beliefs and attitudes, b) knowledge, and c) skills, which results in a multicultural competency model with nine competency areas (Sue et al). What the Elder-Counsellors spoke about is generally consistent with the emerging literature on the multicultural counselling competencies developed by Sue et al. in all the competency domains and dimensions.

Self-understanding. The Elder-Counsellors stressed the importance of Euro-Canadian counsellors developing self-understanding by working through personal issues, accepting White privilege, developing intuition, and finding a personal spiritual connection. This corresponds with the competency domain that Sue et al. (1992) term

Counsellor Awareness of Own Assumptions, Values and Biases. Although the language used by Sue et al. is different, there is a great deal of overlap in the concepts. Sue et al. speak about cultural self-knowledge, personal biases, White privilege and understanding social impact. The one difference mentioned by the Elder-Counsellors that Sue et al. did not address is counsellors having some sort of spiritual connection.

Other research has also discussed counsellor self-understanding. Smith and Morrissette's (2001) Canadian study of male Euro-Canadian counsellors who worked with Indigenous clients found that the counsellors became much more aware of their White privilege, more self-reflective about their attitudes, beliefs, values and cultural lenses, and felt stimulated to develop their own spiritual connections. The importance of counsellor spirituality is supported by the literature as spirituality is a fundamental aspect of Indigenous culture and worldview (Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Garrett & Herring, 2001; Garrett & Wilbur, 1999; McCormick, 1994; Peavy, 1993).

Understanding Indigenous realities. In the second domain of the multicultural counselling competencies, called *Understanding the Worldview of the Culturally Different Client*, Sue et al. (1992) speak to the importance of counsellors having specific cultural and historical knowledge about their clients and becoming actively involved in their clients' cultural communities. However, they did not specify how and where counsellors were to get this knowledge. The Elder-Counsellors also emphasized the need for Euro-Canadian counsellors to understand and appreciate Indigenous history, culture and worldview. The aspects of Indigenous culture and worldview that they thought were essential are consistent with those emphasized in the existing literature. These include:

the concept of "relationality" (Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Garrett & Herring, 2001;Garrett & Wilbur, 1999), the importance of spirituality (Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Garrett & Herring, 2001; Garrett & Wilbur, 1999), the ethic of non-interference (Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Garrett & Herring, 2001; Ross, 1992; Sue & Sue, 2003), an awareness of Indigenous healing practices (Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Herring, 1996; Herring, 1994; Sue & Sue, 2003), and attentiveness to possible differences in discourse styles (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; LaFromboise et al., 1990; Ross, 1992; Sue & Sue, 2003).

The Elder-Counsellors asserted that knowledge about Indigenous culture needs to come from unbiased sources and should not be presented from an ethnocentric viewpoint. They suggested that being involved in Indigenous cultural events, activities and communities was a method of learning about Indigenous worldview and culture and that this way of gaining knowledge and understanding was far more beneficial than reading about Indigenous culture from a book. Smith and Morrissette (2001) also found that Euro-Canadian counsellors working with Indigenous clients realized that involvement in the community assisted them in understanding their clients, while Peavy (1993) suggested that school counsellors become involved in the local Indigenous community and even take an active role in supporting cultural understanding in the school environment .

Culturally appropriate approaches. In the domain of cultural competency identified by Sue et al (1992) as *Developing Appropriate Intervention Strategies and Techniques,* culturally skilled counsellors use their knowledge and understanding of history, culture, and a specific worldview to decide what interventions and strategies would be most culturally appropriate with their clients. The Elder-Counsellors had a great deal to say about the importance of counsellors utilizing their knowledge of the impacts of centuries of imperialist thinking and colonization on Indigenous peoples , together with their understanding of Indigenous worldview and culture, to configure counselling in a way that would be more sensitive and culturally appropriate. In fact, they suggested that a culturally appropriate approach include flexibility around the structure of counselling, ways of connecting with clients, and strategies and interventions that are compatible with Indigenous culture.

First, the Elder-Counsellors suggested that counsellors be more flexible in structuring counselling sessions by considering out-of-office sessions, being accommodating about counselling times, being adaptable around the timing of paperwork, and considering client networks when deciding on who attends counselling. Herring (1997) and Smith and Morrissette (2001) also spoke to the importance of flexibility around scheduling counselling times, finding a place in which clients feel safe and comfortable and in allowing family and community members to attend sessions. What was mentioned by the Elder-Counsellors in this study that has not been discussed in the literature is flexibility around the timing of completing paperwork.

Connecting with clients. Second, the Elder-Counsellors spoke about the process of counselling and how counsellors can connect with clients by coming from a hopeful stance, by being open and using self-disclosure, by treating clients as unique individuals, by verifying clients as the experts of their lives and by not using a directive counselling style.

In hope-focused counselling, it is the therapist's undertaking to plant a seed of hope in each client in order to broaden his or her perspective (Edey, Jevne & Westra, 1998). Research has shown that higher hope individuals have better outcomes in their lives, so there is value in including a hope-focused and spiritual component in counselling (Chandler, Holden & Kolander, 1992; Snyder, 1995). Although the multicultural counselling literature does not address this issue and many counselling programs do not discuss or encourage counsellor spirituality, the idea of bringing hope and spirituality into counselling may be gaining some acceptance. According to the Elder-Counsellors, being able to bring hope and spirituality into counselling with Indigenous clients is very beneficial.

The Western approach to counselling supports the belief that counsellor self-disclosure should be kept to a minimum. The studies that have examined the impact of counsellor self-disclosure on the counselling relationship have had mixed results (Atkinson & Lowe, 1995). However, no studies have looked specifically at counsellor self-disclosure when the clients were Indigenous (Atkinson & Lowe). However, a number of U.S. journal articles have suggested that counsellor self-disclosure is a culturally appropriate way to develop trust with Indigenous clients (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Garrett & Herring, 2001; Thomason, 1991). The Elder-Counsellors also supported counsellor self-disclosure as a means of showing clients the kind of person the counsellor is, thereby enhancing trust and assisting in the development of a genuine relationship.

The concept of respecting clients as individuals, and not stereotyping based on apparent culture, was fundamental to the Elder-Counsellors, who felt it was vital in aiding the development of a therapeutic relationship. This supports the literature that suggests counsellors need to put aside preconceptions and be open to the individual before them (Atkinson & Lowe, 1995; Herring, 1994; Thomason, 1991; Trimble & Thurman, 2002).

Closely aligned to this is the importance of treating clients as the experts of their lives. The Elder-Counsellors stressed that, because of the historic power imbalance between members of the dominant society and Indigenous peoples, Euro-Canadian counsellors develop an egalitarian relationship with clients in which the clients are supported to find their own solutions. All five Elder-Counsellors agreed that using a directive approach is not respectful and not empowering when working with Indigenous clients, even if the client prefers it. This corroborates the more recent research done by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers (Bichsel and Mallinckrodt, 2001; Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Herring, 1997; Smith & Morrissette, 2001; Sue & Sue, 2003).

Holistic approaches. Third, in terms of counselling approaches and interventions, the Elder-Counsellors emphasized how understanding and appreciating Indigenous worldview would help counsellors find holistic ways of working with clients that would help clients find balance in their lives, connect their bodies and feelings, and determine the roots of the presenting issues. This is consistent with the findings of the McCormick (1994) study on how Indigenous individuals in British Columbia find healing by addressing body, mind, emotions and spirit. It is also supported by the Kirmayer et al. (2000) study on how Indigenous individuals overcome psychological stress, the Peavy (1993) study on beneficial counselling with First Nations students, and other U.S. studies.

These studies all emphasize the importance of seeking balance in life and focusing on the contextual aspects of problems rather than just intrapsychic ones (Garrett & Carroll, 2000; Garrett & Herring, 2001; Garrett & Wilbur, 1999; Herring, 1997; Sue & Sue, 2003).

The Elder-Counsellors also suggested that Euro-Canadian counsellors not be bound to specific techniques but tailor interventions to the individual and the situation. Previous articles highlighted this point as well (Herring, 1994; Thomason, 1993). The Elder-Counsellors wanted Euro-Canadian counsellors to become knowledgeable about Indigenous healing practices. They emphasized the importance of presenting Indigenous healing approaches as an option and the need to help clients identify those Indigenous healers who are well respected in the Indigenous community. Although there is reference in the literature about the value of counsellors seeking consultation with Indigenous healers, there is no caution about the importance of counsellors being knowledgeable about who they refer clients to (LaFromboise et al., 1990; Lee & Armstrong, 1995).

The Elder-Counsellors discussed a few appropriate interventions that Indigenous clients may find beneficial such as story telling and metaphor, humour and allowing clients to vent their anger. These also fall under Sue et al.'s (1992) third domain of culturally sensitive strategies and techniques. Peavy (1993) recommended the use of storytelling when working with Indigenous clients as this is an important component of Indigenous culture. Other researchers have also identified storytelling and humour as appropriate interventions (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Garrett & Herring 2001). However, assisting clients to vent anger has not emerged as a topic in previous articles that discuss working with Indigenous clients.

Although Sue et al. (1992) did list some specific skills such as being open to a culturally sensitive helping style, using suitable verbal and nonverbal skills, searching for the root of the problem, utilizing nonbiased assessment techniques, considering family connections, and being open to traditional healing methods, they did not identify others such as flexibility around the counselling setting, or attitudes of the counsellor such as using self-disclosure, coming from a hopeful stance or treating each client as unique. As in any model, it is difficult to identify categories that include all instances of appropriate attitudes, knowledge and skills. Arredondo (1999) stated that true competency would be revealed at the level of the interventions and from what was said by the Elder-Counsellors, this appears accurate. Having said that, the model developed by Sue et al. does fit generally with what the Elder-Counsellors pointed out as being the most salient qualities and skills that they would look for in a Euro-Canadian counsellor working with Indigenous clients.

Multicultural Counselling: The Universal Approach

Patterson's (1996) etic approach, which de-emphasizes the need to understand a specific group's history and worldview and use of culture specific interventions, does not fit well with what was shared by the Elder-Counsellors. Patterson suggested that the intermixing of cultures globally is leading to a world of increasing homogeneity and a "worldview representing the common humanity" (p. 230). He stated that it is the personal qualities of the counsellor and ability to develop a therapeutic relationship that are essential. This does not fit well with what the Elder-Counsellors suggested because it does not take into consideration the marginalization of Indigenous peoples in this country and the long-term, devastating effects of colonization and attempted assimilation. Without understanding this history, it would be very difficult for a Euro-Canadian counsellor to establish a supportive therapeutic relationship with Indigenous clients. Recent research by Smith and Morrissette (2001) supports this assertion. They found that male Euro-Canadian counsellors working with Indigenous clients found it much more difficult to engage their clients and develop a trusting relationship than the counsellors had anticipated—until they became more knowledgeable about the culture and worldview.

The Common Factors Perspective

The perspective taken by Fischer, Jome and Atkinson (1998), that culturally specific interventions are not as important as the common elements of counselling, regardless of the theoretical approach one uses, has merit and fits somewhat with what was said by the Elder-Counsellors. Fischer et al. point out that the key to counselling effectiveness depends on the following common factors: the quality of the therapeutic relationship, a shared worldview, client expectations, and a ritual that both client and counsellor believe to be helpful. They do acknowledge that these common factors must be combined with a thorough knowledge of the cultural context of the client for healing to take place, however, they argue that developing cultural specific interventions is not necessary. In this study, the Elder-Counsellors did point out that some culture specific interventions, particularly storytelling, may be effective and beneficial.

In addition, research by Pope-Davis et al.(2002),which suggested that merely expressing interest in the client's culture was enough to form an effective cross-cultural helping relationship, regardless of actual cultural competence, would not apply to working with Indigenous clients. The Elder-Counsellors implied that when Euro-Canadian counsellors work with Indigenous clients, the presenting issue always has a cultural and historical component because of the devastating impacts of colonization and themarginalization of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Therefore, what the Elder-Counsellors suggested about having a deep understanding and knowledge of Indigenous history, culture and worldview is crucial to developing rapport with Indigenous clients. Expressing interest in Indigenous culture and worldview may not be sufficient to allow for a trusting bond to be established in the first session so that the client would want to return for a second session. This is confirmed by the Peavy (1993) study, which states very clearly that non-Indigenous counsellors who have little or no knowledge of Indigenous culture should not be counselling Indigenous clients.

Training Implications

The suggestions brought forward by the Elder-Counsellors indicate that university training for counsellors may benefit from modifications in a few areas. The Elder-Counsellors were in favour of counsellor training including more courses on Canadian history from an Indigenous perspective so that counsellor trainees would have more knowledge and understanding of how Indigenous peoples have been colonized, marginalized, and traumatized in this country. This type of understanding would be essential for Euro-Canadian counsellors to appreciate how their relationship with

Indigenous clients may be affected by the historical and present day environmental context of the clients' presenting issues. Also, providing opportunities for counsellor trainees to become immersed in Indigenous communities through participation in community life rather than restricting themselves to professional roles may also be beneficial. This could be set up by establishing liaisons between counselling programs and Indigenous communities and service providers.

In addition, once Euro-Canadian counsellor trainees have a sufficient background in Indigenous history, culture and worldview, it may be helpful to provide them with practicum opportunities in counselling centres where they can work with Indigenous clients. This may stimulate them in the development of a culturally appropriate practice. It is apparent from the Smith and Morrissette (2001) study, that the counsellors involved may have had less of a struggle adapting to their work situation if they had more cultural understanding prior to arrival.

Based on this information, counselling trainees and Indigenous clients would benefit if University counselling departments made cross-cultural counselling courses mandatory at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Additionally, all counselling students should be required to take a course, at the undergraduate level, about the history of colonization and how this has affected Indigenous peoples around the globe. Students, who intend to work in a Canadian context, should have a general knowledge of colonization and a specific knowledge of Indigenous history and issues in Canada as it is likely that sometime in their working lives they will be providing services to Indigenous clients. It would also be beneficial if counsellor practicum courses were modified to include discussions of counsellor and client spirituality and students were encouraged to develop self-understanding and client understanding that took into consideration cultural differences. Providing clinical supervision to students that helps them learn to adapt the counselling environment, develop flexibility around the structure of counselling sessions, understand relationship building and employ culturally appropriate interventions would also be constructive.

Completing this Study: The Researcher's Experience

Completing this study has been very enlightening to me as an individual and as a counsellor. I have to confess that one of my main intentions for deciding to compete this study stemmed from my desire to be in the company of wise, warm, knowing, patient and understanding Elders who could provide me with insight that would help me to be a more sensitive counsellor when working with Indigenous clients. A secondary aspiration stemmed from the belief that if their knowledge and wisdom would help me, it may also be beneficial to other counsellors who work with this client group. In addition, based on the wisdom of the Elder-Counsellors, I might be able to provide some suggestions for universities around counselling training to assist Euro-Canadian counsellors in becoming more culturally competent when working with Indigenous clients.

What was totally unexpected, and one of the most significant aspects of my growth, has been the development of an awareness of why I felt so comfortable with the Elder-Counsellors and why I was able to appreciate and see the value in what they said. What they shared resonated so deeply within me. This sense of "yes, this fits" made me realize that I had actually came to this study with a great deal more understanding of

Indigenous worldview and culture than I realized. Jarvis (1992), in his book *Paradoxes of Learning*, discussed the two ways that adults learn. One way is non-reflective learning, the other reflective learning. Incidental learning, a kind of non-reflective learning that happens on the periphery of consciousness, describes the kind of learning I experienced in my years living a more traditional lifestyle with my Indigenous husband. I now realize that over time, while I was immersed in a culture that was not the one of my childhood, I came to know and understand aspects of Indigenous culture without reflecting on it. It was only through my reading for this study and my conversations with the Elder-Counsellors that this understanding and way of knowing came into my consciousness. All of a sudden I started to understand why the Inuit clients I worked with felt comfortable with me. I had assumed that I knew nothing of Inuit culture and, for the most part, this was true. However, I did "know"—somewhere in the depths of my being—something about the Inuit way of "seeing" the world. Having this mutual understanding of worldview, although unarticulated, made it possible for us to connect and move forward in counselling. This is consistent with the Elder-Counsellors' emphasis on deep cultural understanding as a prerequisite for effective counselling with Indigenous clients

I now believe that counsellors, particularly counsellors from the dominant society, need to be willing to immerse themselves in their clients' cultures if they want to see the world from a new perspective. Not everyone may want to do this or will have the time and opportunity to do this. However, without doing so, it may be very difficult to come to see the world in new ways and to appreciate other ways of knowing and understanding.

Evaluation of this Research

Ellis (1998) proposed a number of questions that she suggests qualitative researchers need to answer when they evaluate their research:

1. Is it plausible, convincing?
2. Does it fit with other material we know?
3. Does it have power to change practice?
4. Has the researcher's understanding been transformed?
5. Has a solution been uncovered?
6. Have new possibilities been opened up for the researcher, research participants, and the structure of the context? (p. 30).

In this section, I will answer each of these questions in relation to the present study. I believe that I can, in good conscience, say that this research is plausible and convincing. It complements and extends existing research on how to work effectively with Indigenous clients. It can change practice if the counsellors reading the material are open to the wisdom and insights of the Elder-Counsellors. As discussed in the training section, working effectively with Indigenous clients may require Euro-Canadian counsellors to question their assumptions about the counselling process and consider new ways of connecting and interacting with clients. If Euro-Canadian counsellors develop an appreciation of Indigenous culture, history and worldview, Indigenous clients may find counselling more beneficial. This may change the current hesitancy to seek counselling from a non-Indigenous helper and the tendency to terminate counselling early (French, 1989; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Sue, 1981; Peavy, 1993).

My understanding has changed as a result of completing this study and I now recognise the absolute importance of having a deep knowledge and understanding of the culture, history and worldview of one's clients. A solution has been uncovered in the sense that a counsellor wanting to work with Indigenous clients has access, through the reading of this document, to the tools necessary to be effective and helpful in working with Indigenous clients. In addition, new possibilities have been opened up for the researcher and the Elder-Counsellors through working together: (a) by creating deeper cross-cultural understandings, and (b) by making this valuable information more accessible to others who may benefit from it. In having their stories and perspectives on counselling heard and presented, the Elder-Counsellors voices have been honoured and their wisdom valued.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study is limited because only five Elder-Counsellors were involved. However, the fact that they had training in Western counselling approaches and in culturally appropriate ways of working with Indigenous clients made them both rare and unique. Their suggestions for Euro-Canadian counsellors were anchored in their own personal and professional experiences and histories, making them extremely helpful. It is important to note that while their views and suggestions are valuable, they may or may not represent the perspectives of other Indigenous Elders or all Indigenous cultures.

While it was invaluable to interview the Elder-Counsellors and obtain their suggestions for how to work in a beneficial and culturally appropriate manner with Indigenous clients, additional interview research with Indigenous individuals, who have attended counselling with a Euro-Canadian counsellor, will add to the body of knowledge already available. Asking these clients about helpful and hindering experiences and counsellor characteristics would help cross-validate the Elder-Counsellors' suggestions. Peavy (1993) began this type of inquiry with Indigenous secondary school students seeking the assistance of school counsellors. This line of inquiry needs to be extended to Indigenous clients of various ages seeking help for mental health issues. Other directions for future research involve program evaluation studies to examine how Euro-Canadian counsellor trainees' multicultural competence is affected through immersion in Indigenous communities and through work with Indigenous clients.

Final Thoughts

This circle is now complete. I have brought what I have learned through my life experiences together with what the Elder-Counsellors shared with me and we have created a document that contains wisdoms and insights that I hope Euro-Canadian counsellors and others may find beneficial. If this begins another circle that will bring forth further understandings and deeper knowledge, my intentions will have been realized. Because I want an Elder to have the last word, I will end with the poetry of hereditary Coast Salish Chief, Dan George (1974):

> Soon there will be many books
> that will tell of our ways
> and perhaps will shame even those
> who think us inferior
> only because we are different.
> To those who believe in the power
> of the written word these books
> will proclaim our cultural worth.
> It has been done so for other races
> and their teachings.

This is how our young people
will bring to you the true image
of our Native people
and destroy the distortion
of which we have been the victims
for so long.
Then we will prosper in all things.
From our children will come those braves,
who will carry the torches to the places
where our ancestors rest.
There we will bow our heads
and chant the song of their honor.
This is how the void will be filled
between the old and the new ways. (p. 55)

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Information Letter

What this Study is About

For many years researchers have been looking at what personal qualities counsellors might need to work with clients from other cultures and what kinds of things counsellors could do that would be most helpful. Most of the work focused on the counsellor's perspective. This study wants to ask Indigenous Elder-Counsellors for their views of what would be most helpful if a European-Canadian counsellor is working with Indigenous clients. What qualities should the counsellor have, what kinds of counsellor actions do they think would be most helpful and what kind of counselling environment or situation would Indigenous clients find most supportive.

This is not a trick study where participants are being asked one thing and the researcher is actually looking for something else. This is a "what you see is what you get" kind of study. My name is Regina Price and I am a Master's student in Counselling at the University of Alberta who is trying to complete my Master's thesis. I have lived with and among Aboriginal families in the Yukon and my children are band members of a B.C. First Nation. This is why I think it is so important to understand the perspectives of Indigenous people about counselling and the counselling process.

If you take part in this study I will ask about yourself and your involvement in your traditional culture and with western style counselling. This will be followed by a conversation on several topics such as what you consider the most helpful qualities that a counsellor should have, where the counselling meetings should take place and for how long and how often, and what kinds of things the counsellor could do that would be most helpful. I will audio-tape these conversations to make sure all your words are correctly recorded. Everything you say will be kept private and confidential because you can use a code name. However, if you wish to use your legal or spiritual name, this is also okay.

I will send the audio-tapes to be typed by a person who will also keep the information confidential and who will not know your real name unless you decide to use it in the study. Once all the interviews are typed, you and I will talk further about what you have said and you can change or add information. I want to be sure that I understand what you are suggesting and I want to gain a deeper understanding of your views so that I can honor our conversation as I write my thesis and articles.

I will then look at what all the Elder/Counsellors have said and try to group the comments in ways that will be helpful to our understanding of what Indigenous individuals would find helpful if they went to a European-Canadian counsellor. The grouped information and some of your quotes may be presented at a conference or published in a journal article or book chapter to help other counsellors know what might be helpful if they are counselling an Indigenous individual or family.

If you are interested in participating in this study or want more information, you can contact Regina Price at (780) 434-5420 (home), leave a message at the University of Alberta Education Clinic at 492-3746, or send e-mail to reeprice@shaw.ca

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Agreement to Participate

I understand that this study is asking some Indigenous Elder-Counsellors for their views about what would be most helpful if European-Canadian counsellors are working with Indigenous clients. This study will provide information for counsellors and researchers about how to make counselling a better experience for Indigenous clients. It is being done by Regina Price as her master's thesis in counselling psychology at the University of Alberta.

By signing this form, I am agreeing to take part in this study. I know that taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without any questions or problems.

I understand that I will be asked information about myself and my cultural background. After this, I will be asked for comments on topics like what qualities a counsellor should have, where the counselling meetings should take place and for how long and how often, what the relationship between the counsellor and client should be like, and what kinds of things the counsellor could do that might be helpful in specific situations. The interview will take about 2 hours.

I understand that my voice will be tape recorded during the interviews. My real name will not come up anywhere on the tape because the researcher (Regina) will replace it with a code name that I have chosen unless I decide to use my legal or spiritual name. After the interview is over, my answers will be sent for typing. My legal name will not be given to the person doing the typing (unless I choose to use my legal or spiritual name). Only Regina, the researcher, will have my real name, which will be kept locked up and private.

I understand that once the interview is typed, Regina and I will talk about my comments over the phone to see if she understood me correctly and I will have time to add, take out or change what I said. Then Regina will look at the answers from all the Elder-Counsellors interviewed and see if there are ways to connect them that will help others understand what Indigenous clients would find most helpful. The grouped information and some of my own words or those of others may be presented at a conference or published in a journal article or book to help other counsellors know how they can make counselling a better experience for Indigenous people. My real name will not be used when this is done, unless I tell Regina to use it.

I understand that if I have any questions or concerns or want to know the results of the study I can call Regina Price at (780) 434-5420 (home), leave a message at the University of Alberta Education Clinic at (780) 492-3746, send an email to reeprice@shaw.ca or call Regina's supervisor, Dr. Noorfarah Merali, Assistant Professor of Counselling Psychology, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta at (780) 492-1158.

Name______________________________ **Signature**________________________________
(please print)
Code Name:________________________________

Date___________________ **Researcher's Signature**______________________________